

The Beat Within



THE BEAT WITHIN • A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF WRITING AND ART FROM THE INSIDE • VOLUME 13.07



Welcome back Beat editorial note readers, issue 13.07 is ripe and ready to be read over and over until you had enough, and then you can so kindly pass this gem of an issue on to another interested reader if you choose to, or simply add it to your ever growing collection of Beats!

Usually we start our editorial note with a long commentary, but this week we'll speak a little on the topics before we present them to you the way they were presented in our weekly workshops.

This week's thoughtful issue is dedicated to the issue of **HEALTH**, both physical and mental. We stressed to our writers that we wanted to hear their stories and perspectives on our health topics, and that's what we have here, honest stories and thoughts on the following topics pertaining to our health.

Our first topic as it was presented in our workshops, "Doctor, Doctor" - When was the last time you went to the doctor? Do you have a family doctor? What are your experiences with doctors? Do you trust them? When you think of doctors, what comes to mind? Do you only think of life-or-death situations, or do you get regular check-ups as well? Do you take your doctor's advice? Or if you avoid doctors altogether, tell us why? Take us on a journey into your last visit with a doctor—be it at the doctor's office, hospital, or juvenile hall. Tell The Beat about your experiences with doctors and the role they play in your life. (Have you ever considered becoming a doctor yourself?)

This topic gave you writers the chance to examine good doctors and bad doctors, and when it comes to being taken care of for the casual check up, to a life and death situation when the doctor is most critical. We think you writers who stepped up with this topic did a fine job on the "doctor, doctor" topic.

Our second topic is definitely our most popular. It's no joke, returning home is hard and challenging as much as we long for home and our chillin' kind of ways. Our writers don't hold back any of their fears and concerns about returning home. The temptation runs deep. For many who have changed or are taking the courageous steps in bettering their lives know, that although they feel different about themselves, their communities, their home life is pretty much the same as they left it. What to do when all the drama is in your home, or if not in the home, right out front of your house.

This second topic, reads, "The Hard Part About Returning Home" - Beat writers often talk about the positive side of getting out, but this week, we want you to share the challenges. For those of you who've been here before, what are the challenges you face when you return home after being in jail? And if this is your first time, what worries do you have about going home? If you go home and decide you want to get out of the game, where will you turn? Who helps you with your every-day needs, like going to school, and staying healthy? Who helps you with your emotional needs? Or if you have had a parent return home from prison, what has been challenging for them? Is it getting a job, or dealing with the responsibilities they now have?

The next topic is not as popular, we knew that as we created this challenging topic, given it is not an easy topic to address or admit to.

Number three, "Mental Health" - What does that mean to you? - Mental health is a phrase that means

your psychological or mental well-being. When you think of the term "mental health" what comes to mind? Do you think you are mentally healthy? How are you looked upon if you are seeing a psychiatrist or counselor? Are there people in your family or circle of friends who you think have mental health issues? Do they get help? If so, where do they go? What does being in jail do to your mental health? Could you benefit or have you benefited from some type of mental health counseling? If you've had counseling, tell us about it. Who in your life do you think needs counseling?

Our final topic did not get as many contributions, but enough to get a decent taste of how our writers portray themselves in their present situations.

The last topic, "A Healthy Life" - When you look at your life and what you've seen, done, and where you are heading, do you think you have a healthy life? (i.e. healthy habits, relationships, body and mind?) We're not just talking about colds and flus and eating your vegetables, but a larger sense of health. Despite the situation that brings you in here tonight, do you think you are a healthy person? If you think your life is unhealthy, explain.

OK, we know for a fact they you'll read some interesting pieces in this latest issue that evolves around health. We do wish more people, like the professionals in this field and beyond, would get a hold of this issue and future issues of The Beat Within too. This has been our wish from day one. We are trying our best to spread the word, and in due time with your help we can and will! We know as much as you, readers and contributors know, that you faithful Beaters have the answers, and if our elders and those in power took a minute or two to pay attention to your pleas, insights, your stories and your poems in our issues, they would see how thoughtful you are and how much you truly know and care about not only you, but your community - the community most of you will return to, or the community you left, yet your family is still there struggling to make the rent and pay all the bills, while your little brother and sister grow up attempting to avoid the negativity that spews throughout the hood, and you can only hope they hold onto the dream that getting their education will be enough to help them succeed in life, plus this is the dream you have for yourself once you return home too - to make it legitly, to find love, to be with your family, to get a nice paying job, to avoid the police and all trouble, while proving to yourself and all those doubters that you can succeed in the free world.

Knowing this, we thank you all for taking the time to pick The Beat Within up this week. Drop us line! We so look forward to hearing from you in the coming days and weeks. We are as ready as we will ever be in hearing your truths about loss love, violence and hate, change, your God, and your desire to live a better life if and when you get that chance.

Sure we know many of you will never return home, but yet we salute you with your desire to reach others who have a chance at home and delivering your heartfelt pieces. Bottom line, we all know that this incarceration is a trap. The life that brought you here is a trap and we can only hope you can get yourselves out of the webs and begin to live anew!

See you next week!

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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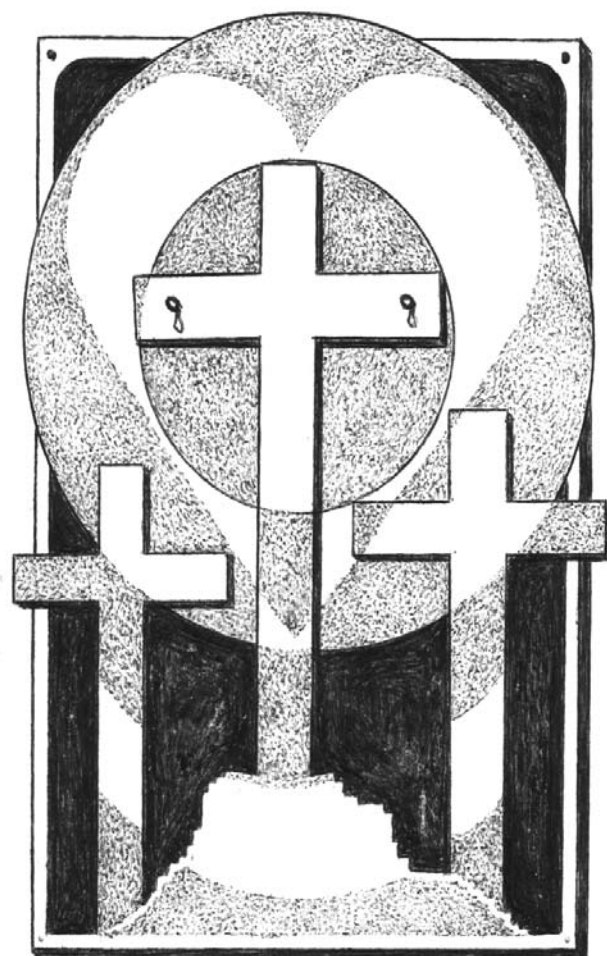
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Monsters-They Are What You Make Them

My Monster is Mom
 My Monster is Dad
 My Monster is life
 My monster is CPS
 My monster is anger
 My monster is fighting
 My monster is cutting
 My monster is myself
 My monster is a lot of things, but these are the ones that I cannot control
 Ones I get charges for; ones I choose to do when I know I should not
 My monsters are not all bad; they are just things I need to get help for
 I chose my first monster as my mom because I grew up around drugs and she had done drugs with me and we were constantly fighting.
 My next monster is my dad because he was never there for me and was always fighting with my mom. He left me alone and told me to grow up on my own.
 My third monster is life because I think it's worthless; no one is there for you. Why should you be willing to live life?
 The next monster is CPS because I'm in it and can not go into further detail about it.
 The next monster is anger because I cannot control it. What has happened to me keeps me angry.
 My next monster is fighting. I support it and think it is fair. I do it for self defense and to save lives.
 My next monster is cutting. I cannot go into detail, but I do not to it for fun.
 These are my monsters, but just because they are my monsters does not mean that I can blame them for my actions. Because now I am serving time to fix my problems.
 Just know that we all have a monsters deep down inside that we wanna fix. From someone with a lot of monsters; you can fix it and make the most of it. You can do your time for your crime and stop your monsters from taking control. You are who you make yourself. You can help yourself or you can destroy yourself. Just give it a try and you will see that it works.

-Amanda, SEF Maricopa County

From The Beat: We appreciate your positive advice to your peers. It sounds like a lot of things have happened in your life to bring you to where you are now. We hope that you will be able to find the right people to help you work through some of the monsters in your life. Your attitude is in the right place, and that is a big step in the right direction!

Doctors

When I think about a doctor, I think he can help us when we almost die. They can make me healthy when I get sick or hurt. I don't know about doctors here because I haven't been here long.

I have been here for a year and a half. I came from China. In China, they wear white uniforms all the time. The medicine is different. They always use different things than in the United States.

When I came to YGC, they took me to General Hospital and I got a chest x-ray, but I don't know if it is the same as in China because I never got an x-ray there.

-Ping Tou, San Francisco

From The Beat: Thank you for teaching us something new. That is what we hope every piece in The Beat will do, but not many do it as well as you have done. Plus, your English is excellent, especially since you've been here such a short time. You've learned well. Now, apply the lessons you've learned from losing your freedom so that it will never happen again!

Dream

It made my heart beat fast with excitement of potential achievements in the future.

When I came down, I asked myself "Where am I? And where is my life?"

My mind moved too fast to focus on any particular memory to give me perspective, that's why I never tried ecstasy again.

As I smoked, I felt an opening in my spirit that hung around my flesh,

a door opened and I was able to step outside my constant worry and discontent.

It also took away the pain of knowing I should be doing something with life.

Drugs only gives people a rest, blinds them from their real life reality,

Post-pones responsibility, a break from society.

This is why I wanted to get away and do something with my life.

So I quit smoking.... Nothing had changed.

I moved to drinking, as I was "home sweet home" under the influence.

I suddenly awoke from the devil, but it was too late, as the cold steel bracelets distorted me.

Then I realized, it had control over me, instead of guzzling from the bottle, it swallowed my soul.

I thank God for putting me here to make me realize that I'm stronger then that,

I now control myself.... Back to reality

-No Hesitation Money's Motivation, Alameda

From The Beat: Sounds like you had bad experiences with drugs. One thing we will tell you is that drugs are not the solution to your problems. And we can see that you've realized that already. You're better off fighting off your problems when you're sober so you can think clear and be level headed about the situation. Drugs are only going to cloud your vision and you're not going to make any good decisions while you're on them. Good piece of writing! This is your best piece yet!

My Heroes

I've got two heroes in my life. And they are the biggest part of me. First let me start off with my mother. She is a strongminded person. You can tell she has a big heart just by having a good conversation with her. My mother's name is Martha, she is 49 years old. She has come a long way from being in prison. No home, car, or anything, she was completely broke, oh yeah my mom was also using heroin since she was a young teen. Now my mom has changed her whole life. She gave her life to God. Since there she has gotten a Jeep Cherokee, a home, and has money. My mom is a different person now and I thank God for helping her.

My dad is my hero too because he has kept me and my mother together forever. He never abandoned me. When you talk to me, you can see and hear my dad, my dad has taught me the number one rule that has got me so far in life, respect your elders and everyone else. He taught me how to drive a car, play basketball, baseball, etc., etc. My father is an intelligent man with great wisdom. He is my hero.

My mother and father are my heroes. I never seen my dad lay hands on my mother, or curse at her. I seen my mom throw a hamburger at my dad's face but they kissed and made up. Well they are still together today, still madly in love. I thank God for giving me the most wonderful parents in the world.

-Raul, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You have written a remarkable piece. Not only is your writing concise, you also have a great story to tell. You have truly been fortunate to have the parents that you do. Bets wishes now that you're on the outs.

My Fault

You get to a certain point where no one's there for you
Spend your whole life being loved
Now no one even adores you
The worst part in life is disappointing another
In my case it's my world
My joy
My mother
My heart's cracked in two
Because I let her down
Too difficult to smile
So I live with a frown
I'm so ashamed of myself
Too even look in a mirror
And when I do it's like I'm a ghost
Like I'm not really here
I know one day we'll get through this
And get it clear
Until then I'll fill the cracks in my heart with my tears.

-Robert, Durango Maricopa County

From The Beat: It's tough feeling like you've disappointed someone, especially someone you care so much about. What are you going to change in your life in order to make up for your mistakes? It may take some time and patience, but you can repair the broken relationships in your life. However, you have to be willing to work hard at not making the same mistake again. Trust is easily broken, but very difficult to earn back.

Surprise Me

Surprise me with your grace
And all of your abundant love
Surprise me with your heart
The glow that it shares
Surprise me with your smile
If you don't mind me to invite
Surprise me with the glamour
Which I once had
Surprise me with your beauty
That I'm trying to cap over
Surprise me with that ring
"Would you marry me?"
I reply yes, yes, you
Surprise me with all
I love you too!

-Ayesha, SEF Maricopa County

From The Beat: You have written a very moving and eloquent poem. Poems possess many meanings for many people. It's a great gift you have. You should treasure it and cultivate it by writing more. The most touching poems come from the heart.

No Progress Without Struggle

We all have struggles in the outs, and a lot of times it's noticeable and we think 'bout change. We try ta change, but little do we know that change in the outs can't be done without change in the inside first, a personal change. Frederick Douglass said in 1857:

"If there is no struggle there is no progress." And since we all have problems that make us struggle, we all have to find a solution deep inside that will help us make progress!

-Smokey, Alameda

From The Beat: You have discovered a basic truth that does not change throughout life. Change starts from within. You also show yourself to be a thinker (and reader) who knows what and who is worth quoting. What else have you read by Frederick Douglass? It's clear that you are interested in history, which tells us that your future is very likely going to be better than your past, because unless we know our history, we cannot build on it to create a better future. What kinds of "solutions" are you finding deep inside yourself that will help you make progress?

Would Anyone Know?

I wonder if I were to die in here, would anyone know,
would my sister know, would my brother know?
I always wondered.
If I were to die would I have a funeral?
Would I have a tux with a casket
or will I have a sheet in a cold refrigerator.
I wonder if they would notify my father.
I wonder would I be buried or will I just be dead.
Most likely nobody will know...
I'll just be another dead person in the world.
No one would miss a beat
no one would care I'll just go and nobody will know.

-Momo, Alameda

From The Beat: Your life is precious. If you were to die, the world would be less rich and less bright. We hope you know that. But the point is to live. That's the best way to leave a mark on the world: Live and grow and love and find out what your special gift is for you to share. From the power of this piece, we'd say that writing more poems is a good place to start, because you have the gift of writing in a way that touches the heart.

The Hard Part About Returning home

The hard part about returning home is the drugs, 'cause when you're locked up you don't use any and that's why a lot of people get locked up for. And when I'm stressing I don't tell anybody.

The hardest part about returning home is watching my daughter, realizing that she grew up so fast. The new things and like riding a bike stuff like that cause my baby's mom says I miss a lot.

And it's true but once you get locked up for the first time is always easier to get locked up the second time, and it's hard to get focused cause no one ever told me what's right from wrong and didn't have anybody for mental support, but I'm getting there. I'm learning but the hard part sometimes is for the best so I could show my daughter that I could be a good father and be there for her.

-Aguilar, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Well you will face all kind of challenges when you do return to your home. And you're right once you're caught up in the system it's a little easier to keep coming back because now you've been flagged by the authorities and they're gonna constantly harass you. But you know what, in the end it's all on you. If you want your freedom that bad and you want to keep it, then you must do everything in your will so you won't come back. You must do everything you can to ensure that you're gonna be that great father for your daughter. It's on you and no one else.

Life Is Like A Sponge

Waiting for the day to be broken out of its package, the new sponge is still vibrant of color and soft from never being used. Judgment day comes for the sponge—it's first experience being dipped in the warm, soapy water, to be put to use—wiped across the dirty dishes, wiped across the counter to collect dirt and grime and the little scraps of food.

A day's work is done; the sponge is put aside, going through the same routine, growing with time, as his work is done. Being dipped in the soapy water over and over, muddying the water with dirt and grime and whatever comes across the path of the mighty sponge.

As the sponge grows old, new sponges come. The work of the sponge is degraded to a new task and on to dirtier surfaces. Sponge too old for dishes and is put aside, to be forgotten. The sponge sits for days and days, and shrinks and grows stiff. Soon the sponge has no use and is put in the deep, dark garbage with the dirt and grime that he had once put in there.

-Jon, Marin

From The Beat: You've shown all the stages in the sensuous life of a sponge! You're very adept at merely hinting at how the sponge may feel. How does a human life evolve in a way similar to that of sponge? Do you look at your own life as being in any way like a sponge's? If so, how?

Bad Situation

One day, I woke up after a night of partying. My homie and I both felt that poppin' a pill would make the day go smooth and fast.

Once we popped two pills each. We got up, got dressed, and took off to the block. We met up with some homies, and by then the pills had kicked in. How did I know? Because I felt good and my body began to give me that feeling up my veins.

I guess a little after I wanted to do something to get me hyped and up. So I guess, you could say that we were looking for trouble. We began to talk about people we didn't like and where they kicked it. Some homies brought up some taggers and so off we went to look. It was like ten of us mobbing to a park nearby, but only my friend and I were thizzing. I guess it was my day in a way because as we approached the park's handball court, we had seen them there.

One guy said that they were just talking about us. So we hit them up and one of the guys was getting his story twisted by saying this and that. My homie and I looked at each other and he asked me, "me or you?" I didn't say anything, just ran, and little did I know that because I was on the pill, my jaw was drilling up and down as we began to fight. I felt more violent, but didn't realize how I was swinging or I should say wasn't blocking. As I turned my head, he caught me with a hot one to my jaw. All I heard was "craaack" and felt it move. I knew something had happened and shortly after, we stopped.

Later that day, when I went home, I told my mom to take me to the hospital and found out my jaw had fractured. I was so mad, but I guess I brought it on myself. Later on, I had to get it wired, shut for two months and it just got worse. I couldn't eat anything, just liquid for those months and now I am stuck with a metal plate in my jaw. Every time I think of it, I ask myself "WAS IT WORTH IT?"

-Lefty, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Guess not! This is a remarkable experience you will never forget. You should be glad that it didn't get worse. At least you survived this violent act, but know that others haven't and never got the chance to share the story. What are your plans now? Do you see yourself using those pills again? You also need to be aware that because of those little pills, many lives have been taken. We hope this experience help you get your life on track before it's too late. By the way, this is a good story, but also a nightmare to you.

My Monster

I try to hide from it every day
But somehow it always finds me
It lives with me every day of my life
It's hard to fight it
I try to ignore it
I try to close my eyes
And wish it was never there
But when I open my eyes
It's sitting right in front of me
I pray every night
That I would have never said yes
Or that I would have got up and walked out
But I did not know what to do
So I just stayed and did it
I said just once
But then once became once a week
Then turned into 3-5 times per day
My monster is Drugs

-Candace, SEF Maricopa County

From The Beat: Unfortunately life doesn't have a rewind button. You can't go back and change the past, but you CAN take responsibility for your future. Addiction to drugs is not something that can be solved over night, but if you are willing to work on it, you can overcome it.

What Am I Doing With My Life?

What's going on with The Beat? This is Drew. I'm back in here once again, like always. But while I have been here, I been thinking about my life. I've been thinking about what I'm gonna do with my life, and I want everyone else to think about that, too.

All this time I've been getting locked up, I haven't learned shhh. But this particular time, something clicked in me, and I said, "What the hell am I doing?"

I've been getting locked up for the past five years, and now I am ready to go to school and get a job. When I was on the run, I was doing hellah shhh that I ain't gonna speak about. But all the shhh I did was for nothing, really. I had no real reason for doing what I did, and I feel stupid too.

I ran from Log Cabin Ranch and got sent to Southern California for six months. I was there for five months and ran on my Christmas home pass. When I ran, I had shhh I had to deal with, but I still think I shoulda went back. When I was on the run I was talking to my brother and he said I need to go to school and get off probation because this shhh is a waste of time. I'm basically dead because I'm not doing anything with my life. I'm trying to get my shhh together and take care of my family.

But I'ma holla at The Beat next week.

-Drew, San Francisco

From The Beat: First of all, you are very far from dead, as this fine piece of thinking and writing makes clear. You know, Drew, we all grow up at our own pace (and some of us never grow up). So don't be so hard on yourself. Yes, you were acting like a child, and in those actions, you were leading yourself deeper and deeper into the hole. But it is equally clear that you are no longer thinking like a child. Whatever it is that has "clicked" in your mind is the key to a different life than the one you've been living. Different choices will produce different consequences. If all you were thinking about was getting back to the street and your former life, then we would agree with you that "this shhh is a waste of time." But, because you are thinking about your life and your future, you are not wasting time at all. You are using it, and that's all any of us can ask. Keep thinking, and keep writing.

What Is Depression?

Depression is what I feel when I'm by myself
Depression is when I'm alone and I need someone help
Depression is how I feel when I'm in this place

Depression is when I walking cell at slow pace
Depression is my family and the stress they give
Depression is when you get support, but the negative
Depression is what I feel when I think about my wife
Depression is a game that plays through life.

Still you ask, what is depression?

Depression is a feeling that you feel inside
Depression is when you're trapped with nowhere to hide
Depression is something that makes your stomach ache
and move

Depression its something that takes over if you approve
Depression hits me when I can't see ma love, my wife
Depression its like a drug, it can take your life
Depression it not a feeling of good or bad
Depression is a feeling when you're sad
When I'm depressed I wanna kill or die.

One thing I do know, depression is like an unfelt high
That is depression

-Young Thizz, San Francisco

From The Beat: Even though the pain your depression causes will not be eased by what we say, we have to tell you how much we admire your ability to turn this pain, this depression, into art. That is what you have done here, and it's a remarkable accomplishment! There are at least two causes of depression that we know of. One is external — a family's negativity, ugliness of life's circumstances, having to adapt to living in a cell. The other is internal, the result of chemical imbalances in the brain. If you suffer from the latter, there are medicines that can control the lows you're experiencing, so we hope you talk about this with adults you trust who might be able to help. As to changing the circumstances of your life that lead to depression, all we can say is to urge you not to give up, to recognize your own gifts as a writer/poet, and to trust that tomorrow will be brighter than yesterday.

My Pops

I need my pops
The man got taken by the cops.
When I was just a little boy
playing with my toys.
I don't remember though
It was too long ago.
I just wish he was in my life
because now I have to pay the price
Growing up without a father was hard for me and my
brothers.

The only one teaching us was my mother
but that wasn't good enough. I was put in my car
seat in the back of the CPS car. It left a scar
for moms she didn't do nothing wrong.

It broke her heart the day

They took us away.

It was messed up that we had to pay for what my pops did
I couldn't live with myself if I did what he did.

-Anthony, Durango Maricopa County

From The Beat: This is a very unfortunate situation. Although being separated from your parents undoubtedly left its mark on your life, don't let it cause you to repeat the same mistakes as your father did. Life may be difficult for you at this point, but try to take advantage of any opportunities offered to you by your PO, your caseworker or who ever else may be involved in your life. Don't make your children pay for your mistakes the same way you have paid for your father's.

The Real Testament

Seems like just the other day you was standing right here
But it's starting to get hard 'cause you been gone for a year
Every time I pass the hospital I'm going in shock
Tryin' to block out the memory of you getting shot
Cold blooded 'cause the gun man was a cop
Got hit in the back twice and only made it two blocks
Media sellin' that b-s that ain't even the truth
My ninja never had a pistol so ain't no reason to shoot
I starting to feel heated pull out a weapon and spray
Screaming "ef" the police like the NWA
madness starting to settle down
but its only began givin' money to yo' baby momma
looking out for your son

I guess growing up ain't easy when you young and black
All these hoodies and white - tees can't bring you back
But if God see to it and look out for my friend

I'ma be at the party gates and I'm gonna see you again.

- Vaughan, Alameda

From The Beat: See - this is why you need to quit running the streets/ The media don't care about the pain in this heat/They want their ratings and they don't tell the truth/About too much of what happens to the best of our youth/But if you don't like the world you gotta step up and change it/Give us a new way to re-arrange it/Get your money legit to honor your friend/Show us that this dark time has an end. This flow shows that you have the heart/So the time is now, when you gonna start?

Adapting

I think the hard part of about returning home when you get out is adapting. You have to get used to being around your family and friends and you act different. You want to do certain things but your nervous cause you know that you can get locked up again with the quickness.

At first, you don't even feel like going out and you still do things like your locked up. You have to un-program your self from being locked up to your free and tell yourself you can do more stuff or not do certain stuff. But the hardest thing, I think, is how people look at you - including your family and friends who never been locked up and don't know how it is so they kinda treat you differently too.

-The Adapter, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is one of the most clear and honest pieces about "returning home" that we've read. You really capture the stress, mental ways and emotions of going home.

The Truth Of Life

What's up Beat? Man, I'm doing bad. I'm locked up in JJC facing five charges. I pray they getting dropped and pray I don't have to go back to San Mateo, 'cause they don't play.

But Beat, I'm not going to lie. I'm stressing hard. My girl on my mind real hard 24/7. When you in love, yo' life turn. When you got a good girl, she always got yo' back. Beat, I'm tired of coming to this place. It's time to face life and be a man. You don't need to do a crime to be big and bad. What you need to do is get a job. That's what I'm going to do fo' real.

Being a man is doing what you need to do to hang in life. People say that getting a job is hard. But if you want one, you know you will have one. Living yo' life to the full. That's what's real!

-Lil' Jao, San Francisco

From The Beat: Whether it's because of your girlfriend, or because God has answered your prayers, or for other reasons, we are so encouraged by the new sense of adult responsibility and maturity that we see in your writing and thinking. You are so right that doing crimes does not make you a man. In fact, you know from your own experience that doing crimes too often makes you a slave of other men telling you what to do and when to do it. People who tell you that it's hard living up to being responsible are right. It is hard. But being taken from your family, your girl, all that you know and love, and put into a box like an animal in a zoo is even harder. Now, go out and do what you know is the right thing. Good luck!

Temptation, Frustration, And Poor Judgments

The thing I worry about going home is returning to the same life style that I was already living. I know that it is up to me, and I know that I must take the initiative to change, but temptation and frustration can cloud your judgment and cause you to be in a bad situation.

This slip up here is a wake up call because I'm turning 18 in March of this year. If I had offended any later, then my life could've been in a worse position that it is in. I slipped up over something minor and not for all the other things I was involved in, so I feel lucky. Bad judgment and poor decision making has caused me to be here. My life was going downhill and this is the tripping point. My mind was clouded, but now it's clear and I hope that I can continue keeping a clear mind once I'm out.

-Phat Tom, San Francisco

From The Beats: We also hope you can keep your mind as clear as it is now when you face those inevitable temptations on the outs. It's not just a question of turning 18 and facing more serious consequences (although that's important); it's also a question of growing into the responsible adult we can see is ready to blossom in you. Not everybody opens their eyes and sees the world for what it is, even after the cold bucket of water that coming to juvenile hall represents. We're so glad your eyes are opened. Don't go back to sleep!



How I Feel About Camp

Camp hella weak, got somebody else shoes on our feet
 I keep on writing to The Beat free stylin' without no beat
 But still I go, no matter where I'm at I can flow
 Like E-40 you just got to tell me when to go
 But then I ain't gone stop
 I'm a free style 'till I get to the top
 Freestyle all night like I used to stand on the block
 Staff keep makin' me mad can't wait to get a visit to see
 my dad
 I can tell he fell hurt 'cause he always look sad
 But I love my dad, I'm gone change I tired of makin' you
 mad,
 Don't trip, when I make it to the NFL I'm gon' buy you a
 pad
 To show you I love you dad but I can't forget about my
 mama
 I put her through the same drama
 She used to worry about me when I was runnin' around
 with a kayta
 like my name was Osama
 but now I'm goin' for president like my name Barack
 Obama,
 And I'm goin' bomber like my name is Bush,
 still reminisce about the days when I was a crook so
 watch me look...

-Lil' Ti, Alameda

From The Beat: You could run for office, with that style off the dome, so whatcha gon' do when you get home/hit the streets again and waste your skills/on gunshots, pills, smoke, cheap thrills?/or put your knowledge to a stint in college/we're not trying to dis' just acknowledge/that if you throw away your life and go before your time/then that would be your most heinous crime.

Wrong Life Taken

Few weeks before I got locked up my best friend was shot and killed by a rival gang.

The day started off A-OK at school. Me and my friend Verin were walking around school at lunch time on Friday. We were talking 'bout who has the better relationship wit' their girlfriend, and then my potna R came up to us and told us brothas was fonkin' with the rival gang. The plan was to jump him, and so my potnas went up to the school to make sure nothing happened. And they was at the campus of Burnard White Middle School waiting for R's little brotha to get out.

So as they were waiting they spotted a black truck of the rival gang and so they said they ain't movin' for no ninjas. So as the truck parked at the local store, a bunch of doctors walked up to the school and seen my boys ... so they went back to the truck and waited for a minute and then went back up to the school... and then pop, pop, pop, pop and everyone scattered.

All my boys regrouped in the school and seen that Verin was faced down on the ground and some man run to Verin's body and tried to give CPR to Verin, but seen a bullet hole in the middle of his chest and also seen a bullet hole where his heart was.

The messed up thing about it was that the rival gang killed the wrong person ...and the cops still ain't done nothing.

-Corey, Alameda

From The Beat: A bullet hole where his heart was. There is something wrong and cold about a world where young people with guns wait outside a middle school to do their funk. We are so sorry for the loss of your friend, and for the tears that were shed, by you, by his loved ones, by us too, hearing your story when you read it aloud. We know you didn't make this world you were born into, but you - and all the young people who KNOW the pain, who SUFFERED the loss, are the only ones who will care enough to change it. First the change comes with you. In honor of Verin, in honor of the ones who is left behind, now is the time

Both Hard And Good Part About Not Going Home

What's up Beat? I am locked up and depressed. It doesn't make my life any easier when I call my parents and they tell me they don't want me anymore. They call me a hooker and tell me that they're going to move to Las Vegas and not give me anything.

Sometimes I tell myself, who needs them? But they're my parents and yes I still love them, but I'm only going to be around them if they're positive towards life. Sometimes I wish I never knew my parents and just now start to know them 'cause they're scandalous and harsh.

I cry all the time in my cell, I feel like I hit rock bottom in life. But everyone always said that you have to hit rock bottom in order to succeed and become a better person and stronger.

We had to write a "I have a dream," speech and all I can think of was getting emancipated and staying far away from my parents as possible. Sad, huh? But that's my life and its very depressing. The most depressing is I sit in my cell and talk to the walls and a vent.

-Princess, Alameda

From The Beat: It makes us really sad to think of you separated from your parents, and to hear that they've said these things to you that must have hurt badly. But it offers us hope to hear you putting things in perspective, and hear you talking about life AFTER hitting rock bottom. You are young and intelligent, and you could do so much with your life. It's only just beginning!

She Visits Me In My Dreams: RIP Mama

Mama I miss you, wishin' you was back here

Can't you see that my pops didn't even care...

Life's been messed up with you ain't here

Wishing everything go back to that year you was here

Thinking bout you every day had me shedding tears

Wishing you never passed but the family still here I try

not to think about it but it stills run through my Mind

and I'm still holding on tight and trying to get mines

I just wish pops wouldn't do this to the family

And I know he seeing me doing bad up in these streets.

It's been two years since you been away. I didn't know what to do.

Yo' oldest son going crazy, I know if you was here the family wouldn't be like this....

I know you in a better place and you will always be reminisiced

You the mama that I love in my heart

And you will never be replaced

I just can't forget about the day you went away

It hurt me deeply just to know that my mama is gone now

She visit me in my dreams

So I could see her pretty smile

Seein' her in the casket had me sheddin' tears fo' a while

Until I finally realized I gotta make it through life without her

For my dad, he ain't makin' nothin' better

I'm prayin' to you mama to help me out, to make my life better

Relax in paradise mama, the family miss you.

-Lil' Rondale, Alameda

From The Beat: You had to grow up so quickly, because you lost your mom to sickness and then your dad to the way he just fell apart after she died. We can see how that might lead you into looking for "family" wherever you could find it, and hiding from your pain in all sorts of wild living. ... but this poem has so much love and strength in it, it makes us think that you have the power to get through all of this, the jail time, the custody troubles, the family strife, because you have so much love in your heart, and so much to live for. Imagine for a minute what your mama would want for you - THAT is the life you deserve.

My First Forever Love

What's up Beat? This be yo' boy Grumpy. Tonight I'ma be talking about my first and forever love, Wendy...

I started dating my baby girl since way back, 2003. Me and her been through it all. People used to hate on us a lot and started talking shhh, so we ended up breaking up with each other. But what they don't know is that they can't separate true love. Our love for each other is strong that nothing in this world could break us apart forever.

What they did is make our love stronger. Now, me and my girl got back together and nothing or shhh talking is going to break us apart. I just wanna let me baby girl know that I love you, Babe. Thank you for always being down for me and always having my back. I'm love you and be down for you to good and bad times 'til the wheels fall off.

To all y'all foo's out in the streets banging, that ain't everything. That ain't what's up. What's really up is family. My fam comes first. Me, personally, I'm out that shhh. I ain't banging shhh. I still got love for all my ninjas out there, but I love more my mom and my first and forever love Wendy, aka Baby Girl.

I came back here for some stupid shhh, for defending myself from getting jumped. But it's cool. I'ma be out in two days, so it's cool. I love you, fam bam, and I miss y'all. This be Grumpy, and I'm out. Alrato!

-Grumpy, San Francisco

From The Beat: We don't usually make love pieces into Piece Of the Week, but this is so much more. You have turned a corner in your life by realizing what has lasting value, and that is family. Too many think that once they're down for their gang, there's no other way. You are proving them wrong. Don't let Wendy down again, or your family, or yourself. (We're curious about your title... If it's a "forever love," then how could it be the "first"? It must be the only, or it won't be "forever".)

Dealt Hand

I know some of us have been dealt the crappiest hand that ever been dealt

But I seen my friends takin' their chips and goin' all in, then havin' it all taken away from them.

I even seen my friend with a good ass hand and dropped his cards on the table

Instead of his cards taken from him, his life was taken from him at the age of a young teen.

I can say I've been dealt a pretty OK hand, some cards good some cards bad

I tried to get the ugly cards out of my head first like normal people do, but every time out, but every time I pull from the stack of cards, I seem to pull another bad card. So I have to get it out of my had as quick as possible.

But sometimes I play a good card by accident and lose money.

I learned over my time alive, I noticed the world is one big game of go-fish. You ask for a card and the person yells "go fish!" But sometimes we get lucky and pull the same card and yell "It's my lucky day."

But in my case I haven't been pulling the same cards to yell, it's my lucky day, so from now on, I'm goin' to play my game the right way and stop being a screw up.

That's how I handled my dealt hand

-Corey, Alameda

From The Beat: Great piece! Sometimes it's not all luck, sometimes it's also about knowing when you need to stand up and walk away from the table, to go look for a better game. The thing about cards is that it's all about luck, but in life, we make a lot of our own luck, by choosing where go, whom to associate with, how late to stay out, where to put our energy, what to put in our bodies, how to feed our minds.... Luck is a big part of our lives, but more important than that is the choices WE make. We wish you the best choices and the life you deserve.

Mental Health

When I hear the term "mental health", depression instantly comes to my mind. I don't think that my mind is healthy being in juvenile hall and all. My counselors have seen my depression and are doing their best to help me out. Depression is not an easy thing to cope with. I have had it since I was about 10 years old.

Today I know some ways to ease my mind and relax, but that never makes it go away. I deal with pain that sometimes makes me want to commit suicide, but I know, that killing myself is not worth it. Being locked up feels like it's physically damaging my brain, but it's really not. It has made me very, very depressed. But I am not going write about that because it hurts too much.

When I get out I am going to totally change my life around and leave depression behind.

-Fighting Depression

From The Beat: It's hard not being sad when you're in juvenile hall because you're away from everything you love. You're away from your family, friends, girlfriend, and your own personal possessions. But you have to look at the big picture and you know you're not gonna be in there forever. Learn from this experience and when you change your life you can look back on this and maybe tell your kids one day not to go the route you took. We know it's easier said than done, and more to the story, but if you want a better life we suggest you go for it.

Flashback

I don't like doctors and hospitals
As I walk in I see bright white lights
It's crazy some of the flashbacks I've had
After all my times trying to do right

No matter the good I do everyday
To overcome for the shhh that I caused
Those hospitals bring back the memories of then
When it seemed like all hope was lost

Rushing in the hospital my girl in my arms
Covered in red with blood dripping on the ground
Stanford Hospital the place of her death
Where my life seemed to turn around

Waiting outside in the waiting room
When the doctors pronounced her dead
I remember that day so vividly clear
Her death's imprinted in my head

Three years later my grandpa got sick
And almost died in Intensive Care
In Stanford Hospital that place that I hate
When my mom got sick she went there

Every time I walk in the door
I'm surrounded by sights, sounds, and smells
Of that day my lady died in vain
And I entered everlasting hell.

RIP Danyelle.
August 17, 1991-July 17, 2003

Much love always and forever
"5150"

- Heartsick, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Much love from us also. Tragic events are gonna happen in our life time. Believe it or not but there's one guarantee that we all have in this life no matter what race, color, religion, height, or weight, we're all gonna die. We can't live forever and that's a fact. We're sorry to hear about your girlfriend. We can't imagine to be put in your shoes. But we've lost loved ones too! And the best thing we can do it strive to move on and honor those we lost by celebrating their lives. We have to be strong and make it for those who didn't get the chance. Thank you for paying tribute to your loved one in The Beat!

Have You Ever?

Have you ever lived my life, spent one minute in my shoes?
If you haven't then tell me why you judge me as you do.

Have you ever been abused and couldn't make it clear?
Have you ever used drugs to cover up your fear

Have you ever had a night where you cried yourself to sleep?
Have you ever been homeless not knowing when and how you gonna eat?

Have you ever went to sleep hoping not to awake?
Have you ever searched for love in way too many dates?

Have you ever felt so much pain that you wanted to die?
Have you ever had to witness a brutal suicide?

Have you ever had a spouse who abused you with his fist?
Have you ever sat in jail for a crime you didn't commit?

Have you ever seen your mom almost get killed by your dad?
Have you ever been terribly victimized and wished you never had?

Have you ever had to grieve for a family member truly missed?
Have you ever been at gunpoint because you didn't want to kiss?

Have you ever slept in a car 'cause your family got evicted?
Have you ever wanted to stop using drugs but couldn't 'cause you were addicted?

Have you ever released your anger through self-inflicted wounds?
Have you ever lived a life that could have ended in a tomb?

Have you ever had a friend who drunk way too much booze?
Have you ever had an unwanted pregnancy forcing you to choose?

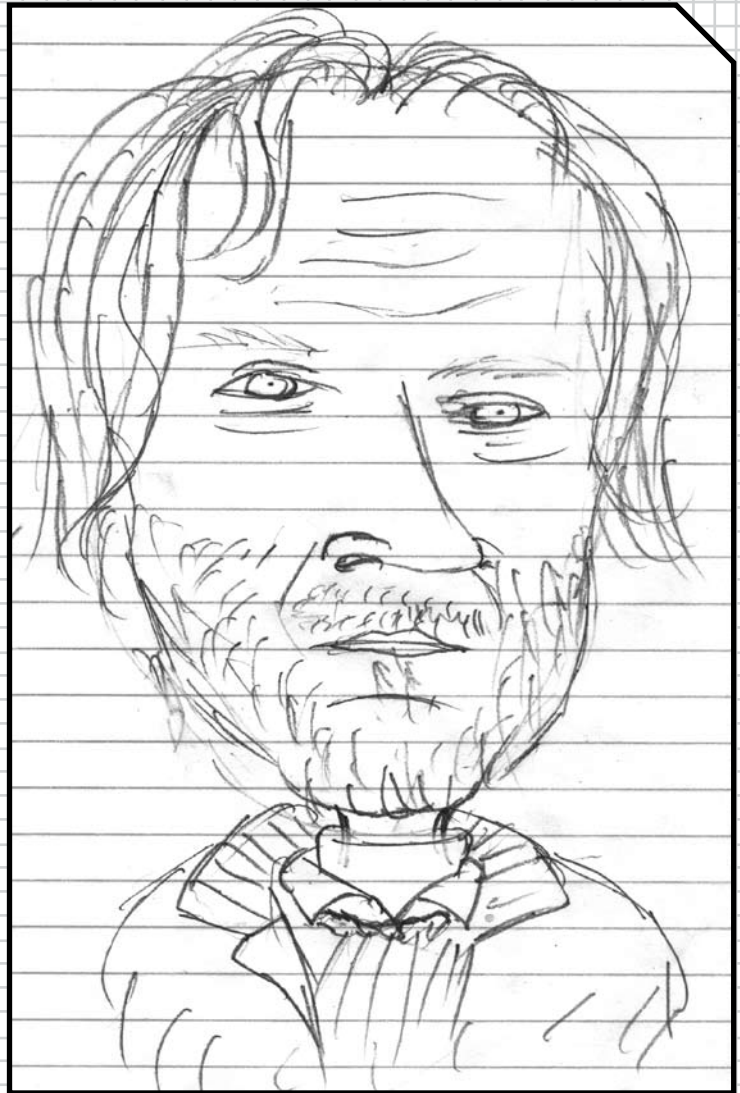
Have you ever made a plan hoping it would be fine?
Have you ever had to write a parent who was away doing time?

Have you ever thought about the feelings you hurt because you made that one wrong choice?
Have you ever tried to share a life experience, but no one heard your voice?

Have you ever lived my life, spent one minute in my shoes?
If you haven't then tell me why you judge me as you do....

-Makayla, Alameda

From The Beat: No one can ever truly understand what another person has been through, but poetry like this takes us close. You've shown so many sides of your life, your experiences, your troubles, your triumphs, all we can say is that one thing has changed from you writing this. You say there was a point where no one heard your voice. But every person lucky enough to read this powerful poem will hear your voice loud and clear. Let's hope they also listen. Peace.



Home

Home is a telephone
Half a blunt and a toilet bowl
Home is having parents and sister wake me up
In the morning to tell me breakfast is cookin'
Home is that warm air that bites you
When you first walk through the door
Home is showering by yo' self
Home is a place where there ain't no police
In the neighborhood telling me I can't
Enjoy being outside with my people
Home is any place but an institution
My home is filled wit' crack rocks and dope spots
My home is constantly invaded
By crooked cops
whose purpose is to send
My people to jail instead of helping them
My home is filled with racism
My home is filled with youth that have no dreams
Of being successful by going to school
My home is broken.

-Gonzo, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a beautiful poem about a home that is broken but still strong, in the same way that your heart has been broken but is still strong. You are the next generation that can make home into something real, that can give the youth something to dream about, by following your own dreams... as a father, a boyfriend, a friend. Tell us how you will do these things.

The Hard Part About Moving Home

What's good wit' da Beat? It's that ninja Meez, and I'm just doin' what I do up in maximum security. It ain't 'bout shhh, but I'ma talk about some of the hardest parts about returning home.

Well, one of the hardest things about returning home is tryin' to do good, and not retaliate against all the ninjas who was talking shhh while you was locked up. Another thing that is hard is not comin' back. Another thing is just tryin' to do right. You so nervous and you really try not to come back, but one day you think it's sweet an' you get wrapped on some other shhh.

When you up in that box thinkin' what you did wrong, you start to get mad 'cause you was out there really tryin' to do good, an' you got caught doing the wrong thing. The main reason why it's hard is because when you get out, the streets is all you know.

-Meez, San Francisco

From The Beat: You know, Meez, "talking shhh" should never be the excuse for doing shhh in retaliation. Words are powerful weapons for sure, but in fairness, they should be "retaliated against" only with other words. That's why our Constitution guarantees us all the right to free speech. We can criticize our government (including juvenile hall, for example) without fear that they will retaliate by locking us up, or worse. But putting that aside, we think you've identified the most important difficulty of returning home, and that is exactly that the streets are what educated you, and there is little else out there to prepare you for a different reality. That puts a lot of responsibility on your shoulders. Unfortunately, it is on your shoulders.

Returning Home

The hard part about returning home is... what home? I ain't got no home to go to 'cause I'm about to be alone. That's once I get out da group home. I wish I had a home to go to, but I don't 'cause I'm finna be 18. No more spendin' money on Jabo jeans 'cause I'm I'ma have to pay rent and shhh. It's a trip. Life's a struggle and then you die. Everbody's living to get money, to get high, especially me, man.

What's up wid life? Is there something I can't understand? Sometimes I don't even try, just stay in da cell thinkin' 'bout what happens when you die.

I wish I had a home to go to, where mom wasn't about to cry for my life. I'm selfish. It sucks, bro. To hell wit' dis. Dat's why I'ma go to da Army or Marines 'cause I ain't got a home that can accept me. I have already tried Job Corps... not for me.

-J Hurtin', San Francisco

From The Beats: It is a tragic comment on the times we live in and the place we live in that a young man like you has no home to return to. That makes it very hard to think about anything relating to making a better future. But still, that is what you have to do in order to move past this place in your life where your actions put you under the control of strangers in a jail rather than under your own control. The questions you ask about the meaning of life and death are questions that have puzzled philosophers, religious leaders, and thinkers of all kinds from the beginning of our time on Earth, so count yourself among those thinkers. We cannot answer your questions because each of us must find the answers for him or herself. We don't know whether the military is a good choice or not, but we admire you for thinking about these profound questions, and we hope you keep thinking about them.

What's Hard For Me About Returning Home

What's up wit' da Beat? Me, chillin', stayin' up, shackin' them suckas,

To me, the hard part of returning home for me would probably be being able to manage my time. I been down for a min., but since then I got used to a structured environment. This is my first time being locked up, so I didn't know how to feel to get out. After nine months, I just finally went outside and felt fresh air. Nine months compared to all the time some people doing... it ain't nothing. But for me it's something. But its coo' 'cause I'm gonna hold my head up in the worst situation.

Another thing that would be hard for me is all the movement around me because I'm used to everybody having a raise they hand to move.

-Gold M, San Francisco

From The Beat: As usually, Gold, you bring an unusual insight into your condition, and to the difficulties it has created for your future freedom. Yes, one of the worst aspects of taking away personal responsibility for decision making (which defines jail life) is how it disables you once you are forced back into the world of personal decision making. However, we have to say that we have great expectations for your personal success as a free man. By understanding the importance of time management, you are so far ahead of most other boys your age and in your situation. We are very used to reading that being here "ain't nothing," so that when we read that it is something to you (as it should be to everyone here), we are further encouraged, because you understand so much. We would love to see you in our office, if you have the time to honor us with a visit. As with everything you write, thank you for this.

Feeling Lonely

What's up, Beat? At this point of my life, I'm feeling lonely and sad, with an anger inside. I feel there ain't nobody here for me so what the ef with this life?

But, wow, that's a trip when you really think about that there's people who do care. But where are they at when I'm locked up? Nowhere.

Yesterday, I had my heart tear apart, my love was shut down - all the love had nowhere to go. So, I thought: Should I make it to anger or hate, but for what?

What is anger and hate going to help me on? Then I thought my stress, my love, my heart - what is the good for if is always getting hurt?

Damn, I'm in love and can't wait to see my lady. She takes my pain away. Next time, I'll think of that before coming here. Maybe next time, just maybe ...

Well, I got some stuff off my chest, but I think what is that good for if next time there will be ... was there. Next time, I'll think of my actions before I turn them into mistakes. Wanna send a shout out to my lady and my son Anthony. I love y'all and can't wait to come home.

-Paysito, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow, this piece really expresses your twisted and painful emotions. It seems like writing them down on paper really helped you understand and come clear. Sounds like you love deeply, which is a gift from the universe.

To me, the hard part of returning home for me would probably be being able to manage my time. I been down for a min., but since then I got used to a structured environment.

Hoping For The Best

The thing I'm thinking about as my most fear is I'm scared to lose my sister. Why? Because she's sick on us and I don't want my sister to die on us,
 Now I'm just thinking about my sister.
 I just want to get out of here
 because I want to take care of my sister and my mom who's got sick on us too.
 She has cancer. I don't know if mom is going to die on me. I don't want that.
 I want my mom to live forever. She is everything to me.
 I want to see my Dad. I don't know my Dad. I wish to see my Dad.
 I hope to see my dad and I hope everything get's better.

-Rene , Durango Maricopa County

From The Beat: Wow, you have some big things going on in your family right now. The last place you need to be is in jail. You need to get your life straight so you can be free to be with your family members in need. You never know what can happen while you are locked up. Show your family you care about them by being willing to sacrifice whatever it was you were doing to get yourself locked up in order to be with them.

The Hard Part About Returning Home

What's good wit' The Beat? The hardest part about returning home is the temptation of smoking weed or drinking Hennessy, or holding the toast for protection. It's easy to return to the same shhh you want to get away from.

When I was out, I was out of control, not listening to my parents, not going to school, and high all the time. But that shhh gets boring real fast, always looking over your shoulder for the police or the next ninja wit' his toast lookin' for ya.

Man, it's hard to be me and you have to return home to the same shhh.

-Bigg E, San Francisco

From The Beats: Yes, it is very hard to have to return to the same conditions that caused you to be in the situation you're in to begin with. Here's the thing, though. Since we know those conditions will be the same, the only variable that can change the picture is you. If you keep "adapting" to those bad conditions in the ways you have in the past, you can expect the same consequences you had to face in the past. If, on the other hand, you can bring a new attitude — and, therefore, a new way of acting — then you will not have to repeat the past again and again. Is it hard? Oh yes! But being locked up like an animal in a cage (or worse) isn't easy! So, which hard choice are you going to make?

Best Woman In The World

I love my Mom so much
 she is the only one I would die for.
 My Mom is the best woman in the world.
 She helped me get out of trouble.
 My Mom is the one and only one that makes me happy.
 She is the best to me.
 You should love your mom and give her your respect.
 My Mom is important to me.
 She shows me love and when I am sad she makes me happy.
 Nobody can do that for me.
 My Mom is why I am in this world.
 My friend did not give birth to me.
 That is why I am afraid to lose my mom the most!

-Donavan. SEF Maricopa County

From the Beat: It would make your mom feel so good to hear this! We hope you tell her regularly how you feel about her. The best way that you can tell your mom you love her, though, is to keep yourself out of trouble! Doing the right thing and obeying your mom is the biggest way to show her you love and respect her. We hope that after you get out, you and your mom will be able to mend your relationship.

The Hard Part About Returning Home Is Being Me

The hard part about returning home is being me. I trip about if and when I go home, I'm going to start doing the same things I was doing before I got locked up. I know that once I get released, I'm going to call some friends and tell them to come pick me up to kick it. I know that the first thing I'm going to tell them is to, "Let's go get some perk." Once we get the perk, we are gonna end up going somewhere to kick it, like, at a homie's house.

Once it's around, like, 9 pm, I know that we are going to end up calling more people to see what's cracking for the night. Obviously there is going to be a telly (a party in a hotel,) there's always tellys on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays.

I'm not sure, but I might get out on the second of February, and today it's the 24th of January. The second of February is going to land on a Saturday. So yeah, anyways, if I end up going to the telly the day I get out, I know I'm going to start using crystal meth. Usually the tellys that I go to, people are always sniffing coke, smoking crystal, and smoking weed.

I think that's going to be hard for me, because before I got locked up, there was never one day that I would not drink. I would be drinking every day. Sometimes I would start drinking in the morning. It's going to be hard to, because before I got locked up, I would go out every day and night to drink and smoke with my homeboys and homegirls. Every day was a kick it day for me. Every day was as if it were to be a Friday or Saturday.

I've been on probation for a while and I act like I'm not. I guess that's the reason why I'm in here, because I smoke crystal and drink on any day as if I have no worries, knowing that my PO can give me a pee test any time. Actually, I was supposed to be taking pee tests every week before I got locked up, but I never went in to take a pee test. I acted like nothing, that's why sometimes I feel like I don't want to leave this place, but I rather be out there than here.

-Shy Boy, Marin

From The Beat: You break down your situation very reasonably, and you express that you know that smoking meth and drinking alcohol almost every day is destroying your health and threatening your freedom. What happens when you take a day off on the outs—no smoking, drinking, partying at all? What do you do for fun? What do you accomplish? How does your mind and body respond? How is it for you in juvy with no access to drugs or anything to drink? Do you enjoy having your mind clear? Get help Shy Boy before you dig a deeper hole in fighting to overcome this attraction/addiction.

Can't Make It On My Own

I can't make it own on my own
 I wish these haters would leave me alone
 They try to get to me but I dust them off
 When it comes to The Beat Within call me the Boss
 I'm confident in myself like Muhammad Ali
 Just like him I believe I can't be beat
 Except I don't box I write from the day to the night
 My writings is good some people try to say they're all right
 I'm the young man that brought my pencil to life
 Some say I'm dull but I believe I'm bright
 Am I gone be Mr. Beat Within I just might
 I never thought something good could come from living this life
 I worry sometimes but I know it's gone be all right.

-Young Mari, Alameda

From The Beat: You can make it on your own. You say you're confident then why aren't you displaying? Why are you setting yourself up for failure? You said you're confident like Muhammad Ali. Then show us. You can make it we believe in you, you just gotta believe in yourself.

By Myself

Why did I have to live this life
 My daddy told me the streets ain't nice
 But I said I'm gonna find out on my own
 Now I'm locked up doing time alone
 But I still feel like I'm the king
 Nobody can change my mind
 I'm gone do something useful with my time
 And I'm gone use my time wisely
 I don't know nobody that writes twenty pages a day
 besides me
 I'm gonna keep on writing 'till my fingers get sore
 It's only so many things I can ignore
 My writings are a way to get the thoughts out of my head
 When I see a pen or pencil it's like when a bull sees red
 I rather be in jail than dead.

-Young Mari, Alameda

From The Beat: Why did you have to live this life? Why did you make the choices you made? We don't know. But you are not by yourself. You got us, The Beat! You can write to us about anything. Keep up the good writing, and read The Beat! There's a whole bunch of people that are in the same situation you are so don't ever say you're alone.

The Hard Part About Getting Out

Man, my time has come. I'm finally goin' home. After bein' locked up for twenty-three months. I'm scared, fo' reals.

I'm 18 now, and it's a whole 'nother ball game. I got to get a job, go to college, apply for this and that. It ain't easy. I'm stressing hard.

I feel like a little kid goin' to middle school again. I became institutionalized, and now its time to overcome that state of mind. I know I'll be okay though. I have faith in my self.

Well, I'm leaving my girl as well. I don't know how I'm gonna make it without her by my side. I guess I'll just have to be strong and wait 'till we are together again. I hope I make it, but I'm scared.

-Cupcake, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It's OK to be scared. When we're scared a bit, we're more alert. Eventually, the crisis passes and we can calm down. If you weren't a bit anxious about reentering the outside world, we'd be worried. This

I'm Going To Be A Nurse

I'm trapped up in a little cell asking myself like why the hell did I bring myself up in here. Thinking I want to get the hell out of here. And when I do get out, I'm going back to college to study to be a RN nurse. Maybe I'll work in a institution like the one I'm in.

I'm locked up an' they ain't gone let me out. It's hard to change your ways, especially when you've been surrounded by negativity almost all your life. Being trapped up in here help me think things through. It helped me look at stuff differently.

I'm 'bout to be 18. I gotta grow up and step it up a notch, 'cause with the life I was livin', it's just gone lead me back up in here, and I don't want that. So when I get out, I'ma stay out. I ain't goin' nowhere if I continue to follow the path I led myself to. I'ma follow another path... the right path.

-Christina, San Francisco

From The Beat: What we admire most about this piece is the fierce determination you have to do better, to change the road you've been traveling, and to do what you need to in order to reach your goal. We need nurses very badly, and if you do what you set out to do, you will never need to worry about finding work. Plus, you will be able to help people, and we can think of nothing more valuable than that. Don't be discouraged by where you are now, and don't let anything keep you from pursuing your dream. You can do it!

Who Am I

Who am I? I'm still young and trying to find out who I really am.

I know some of me, as we speak.

I'm Martin, a man who cares about my family.
 I'm a really good-hearted kid whose intentions are good,
 so please don't let me be misunderstood.

I'm a good kid about my family and about my cash, not what you assumed I'd be.

You might think I'm a gangster and that my intentions are bad.

You might think I'm a menace, you might think I'm a criminal - but you'd be wrong.

I'm none of that, but the opposite.

I might get in trouble and sometimes do wrong things,
 but just because of a few things, don't make assumptions about me.

You can make guesses and stereotype me because of how I dress,

and I can't blame you, because the world always does the same.

-Martin, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We're not quite like the rest of the world. The 'you' we know is who we meet in person in Beat workshops, and the 'you' who reveals himself through his writings in The Beat Within. We try to leave the stereotypes on the other side of the door. When you get to pass through that door again, you can begin to create a better image for yourself, if you want to. But as we all know, what really counts isn't an image, but the substance 'inside'. Do the right thing and the image will follow. Do the right thing and you won't have to worry about the image, whatever it is.

Mental Health

Mental health is what you think mentally. It's all about where your mind frame at. I'm mentally healthy in here and on the outs, especially in here or else I be crazy in this thang. Being in jail teach you how to be healthy because it's no drugs, and you learn how to be patient fa real because all you waiting on is court dates and to go home. You gotta be patient, so you learn to be calm and relax mentally.

The term mental health is mind frame and where it's at. So, is your mind healthy or unhealthy, positive or negative? I know mines is healthy and positive fa sho.

-Monyea, San Francisco

From The Beat: We like the positive attitude (the good mental health) you bring to this piece. But could you explain where your positivity comes from? How do you keep yourself from going "crazy in this thang?" If being drug-free contributes to good health (and we believe it does), are you healthier in here than out there?

A Healthy Life

A healthy life is something I don't have, because I choose to make my life unhealthy by smoking and drinking and doing negative activities. One reason why I choose to smoke is because I like how I feel and how it relaxes me and also my mind.

And another reason is I been doing it for so long I am addicted to it. One reason I think I started smoking is because I was around people doing all the bad drugs. I said bad drugs because they also have good drugs. The good drugs are the drugs that save people's lives. The bad drugs are the ones I use that take people.

-Lil' T, Alameda

From The Beat: You're right there are good drugs and bad drugs. But all drugs are kind of bad in the end. If you do too much of any drug you can easily overdose and kill yourself. If you are addicted then you should get some help. If it's gonna keep bringing you to jail, and away from your family or loved ones, then you need to get help.

A Dumb Decision

This life I'm living is no way a teenage kid should be living 'cause coming back and forth to juvenile ain't cool. At first I didn't really give a damn about coming to jail, but now I'm in here and I'm starting to realize that this is no place for me. I should be out doing some productive or something. But instead I made a dumb decision and ended up here (Juvenile).

What made me realize that I shouldn't be here is when I woke up one morning and my feet touched the cold floor. From there on, I knew I shouldn't be here.

-Chris, San Francisco

From The Beat: By describing the choice that brought you here as "dumb" you tell us that you are not dumb, but smart! Use what you've learned in order to stay out of this place (and worse places). We're curious about one thing, though, Chris. Why didn't you "give a damn" about coming to jail in the first place? What did you expect it to be?

Health

I think I'm pretty mentally healthy, I don't really think I need help from counselors or psychiatrists, but the court thinks I'm emotionally disturbed or something and psychiatrists just try to prescribe unhealthy meds, luckily my parents said NO!

Really what helps me most is trying to stay good and follow God's word, pray and have faith. Also, I practice staying calm and meditation and focusing on positive things. I'm pretty good at being my own counselor.

Although I wasn't always leading a healthy life in the past, all the unhealthiness has brought me to many realizations on what to do and what not to do. When I'm not in here I only eat natural organic food, and exercise a lot.

I had a run in with some drugs, but have learned to stay away from them. Now I'm at the point where I'm just trying to be as good and smart and healthy as possible!

-Thomas, Alameda

From The Beat: Good for you! We're proud to hear you talk like that. You've really matured and learned from your mistakes. You have a lot of things going for you since you practice all those meditation skills on your own. Stay positive and don't lose focus. Your time will come to get out and when you do don't forget to stay healthy and positive.

Hard Part 'Bout Returning Home.

What's good Beat? Feel me, this yo' boy Rams aka Menace, feel me. I'm sitting in here in this unit gettin' ready to get transferred to the Fairfield jail in custody. But screw it, I ain't trippin' off that shhh feel me.

I sometimes think they should keep me locked up, to tell you the truth, because I know if I get out, within a couple of days or weeks I'm still gonna go out and do some dumb shhh and probably come back with a murder case or some shhh. I hope that once I get out I try and stop it, but I always keep comin' back to the city 'cause I was born and raised here. It seems that every time I'm back in da 'hood I really don't care 'bout shhh, and it's normally like dat everywhere I go, but especially in my 'hood 'cause I'm wit' my ninjas.

But hopefully I won't keep doin' hot shhh...or at least keep it to a minimal, feel me...

-Ramsome, Alameda

From The Beat: The truth is that, although we admire the honesty of this piece, we don't feel you when you say you aren't tripping about going to jail! As long as you accept your slave status (which is another way of saying you aren't tripping), you will keep putting yourself deeper and deeper into this dark hole until, one day, you'll open your eyes, and your trip will be one continuous "If only..." Hoping not to keep doing the things that put you here is not enough, and "keeping it to a minimal" is a prescription for more of the same. All we can do is hope that you wake up before that happens.

How Boring It Is To Be On Restructure And In A Single Cell

What's up! Let me tell you how it is in a single cell, on a restructure program. Ever since I've been here, I've been in a single cell for more then half the time here. It's very boring.

Yeah, I got my books and my workout routine. I was so bored one time I worked out to the point where I felt very good inside and I started to laugh hysterically!

Then I sat down and started reading a book called "Swan Song." It's pretty damn good! Then I try to get in touch with my spiritual side, meditate, pray, read books on religion or philosophies.

Then I just mess with the staff and try to make someone laugh whether it makes me look stupid or not as long as someone gets a laugh out of it.

Then later, one of the dumb staff would ruin it by making a dumb joke and just kill the mood between me and the cool staff. But the mood will come back after an awkward silence is gone and the dumb staff looks dumb.

Then eventually I'll go to my room and do the same shhh. Then I read other things and do other weird things. I just crack up out of nowhere. I guess this is a good experience for me to find inner joy, a joy that never stops flowing within myself. Guess I have no choice since I'm so damn bored!

Sorry Beat if it's off topic! I would be there if I can.

-Viet Tiger, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What do you mean you're sorry for writing off topic? This is the purpose of our art of work, to make you enjoy the beauty of self-expression. We also enjoyed it as well. Finding ways to keep you active and happy is a good thing, but it's also really important to use this time for something positive, maybe reflecting on the things you're doing, what will you do in the future, and what you need to become a better person. These are important things!

Always And Forever - RIP Thomas

Oh my God

I don't know what I'm going to do,
I can't believe he's gone.

I don't even know what I feel anymore,
everyone is just saying "damn
we were just with him"

but now he is just a memory.

All I'm thinking is if that is how I'm going to be, just a
memory?

I never knew heroin would go this far,
overdose,

give me chills up and down my spine.

My life is like a revolving door.

Same shhh happens over and over again.

Are all the homies going to keep leaving me
like this?

Or am I going to be the one leaving them next? This is
for my one and only homeboy...

I love you and you won't be a memory to me,
you will always be in mi corazon.

The only question is why?

Why did you have to hurt us like this?

Because you just didn't leave us forever,

but you also left a hole in my heart forever. Something
that will never be replaced

-Sophia, Land Of Enchantment

From the Beat: Keep in mind heroin is a drug, and with all drugs if you do an excess amount there is a very good chance you will die. It almost sounds like you want to be in the gang life, and be with your "homies"? If you continue living a life like this it will remain a revolving door, or as you say you'll be the one leaving.

One Single Wish

If I had one wish in the world I would wish for me to be able to see my big brotha and our future just to know what if...

Now that I'm 17, which was tha' age he died at, I feel a lot like him. And like he passed all of his responsibility to me 'cause without you big brotha, my life seems so empty. I'm numb in tha' chest for a lotta relatives. But other than that I could care less 'bout anything.

In two days, on 1-31-08 you gone for two years, but not here to celebrate it. And me bein' in jail just makes it a lot worse.

Mommy doin' cool she still stay off the block...

Nick and Nihela miss you almost as much as I do. Mama made Nick cut his dreads and now he look jus like yo' ugly ass, but it's cool 'cause I gotta be first ...Damn brotha, why you have to leave me like that? Now I'm so left alone. I mean we got other brothers, sisters and cousins, but me and you was unexplainable. I could care less if I died right now that you gone. That's how hurt, alone and confused I am.

What's out there for me? I love you and miss you, wish I could see and be with you... but I guess you makin' me stay. But you know what, it's tha' team still solid... oh and I got a solid bad lil' mama that's on yo' lil brotha's side... Someone tough so I'm gon' keep her as long as I can.

I think that you sent her to me...

-Lil' Solid, Alameda

From The Beat: We think that reading this piece made us love your brother almost as much as you do...all the little details about your relationship, the jokes, the way you stuck with each other with family, and yeah, the way you end wondering if he sent you the girl who's helping you stay strong now... The thing is, that with a memory like this, the question needs to be "what would my brother have wanted for me?" And we'd bet that your brother wanted you to be happy, strong, out of danger, and doing something that could make you all proud. Just imagine him smiling down on that...

Sounds In The Halls...

I hear the sound of keys...
 People talking
 Like the staff and the homies
 Pumb, pumb
 The sound of my annoying neighbor
 Banging on the wall
 I wish he can get moved
 To another hall
 Squeek, squish, squeek, squish
 I hear the shoes of a staff
 Walking in the hallway
 I have to follow rules
 I wish I was on the outs
 Having it my way...
 Swooooshhh
 The toilet is flushing down
 The water really quick...
 I try to put my picture
 That got sent to me
 On my wall to stick
 Hhhtooo! I spit in the sink...
 Chookchick, hoooh boom
 The staff opening
 And slamming the doors shut
 To be continued...

-Shy Boy, Marin

From The Beat: Very nice poem, evoking the sounds you must listen to every day and night from your room! With nothing for you to do, especially if you can't sleep, read, talk to anyone—there you are, alone, listening to the eternal sounds of juvy.

Life

What's up wit' The Beat? This yo' boy D-Gotty. I'm going to tell you about life.

Well man, life is so messed up. You get in so much trouble you don't know when to turn it around. It is the year 2008 and it's about time you start doing things different in life.

The day you were born 'til 2007 were your years to mess up. Now it is 2008, and people are getting shot or killed for retarded reasons. It's about that time you consider to change yo' life. You don't have to, but take it into consideration. It might take you 1000 times to get it together.

Gone! Holla back.

-D-Gotty, San Francisco

From The Beat: We like the message you're putting out here. Yes, it might take you a thousand times before you change your life, but that's all right. Some people never get it together at all. Our only advice is for you to change every "you" in this piece and substitute the word "I" because, unless you take your own advice, it won't matter what the rest of us do.

The Hard Part About Returning Home

What's up with The Beat? Me, you know what it be, same ol' shhh. Can't wait to hit the streets again.

I saw this topic and asked myself what is the hardest part of coming home. I thought briefly about this topic and I came up with this. The hardest part is the temptation of the streets, my homies, the blunts, the pistols in my face, and, most of all, about my safety.

I really love my mother because she support me in every way there possibly is. She's at all my court dates. She's always here to visit me when she can. My mother always been buying me what I need and whatever I want, she always try to make a way.

I'm out for right now. Get at y'all next week. Ya boy MB...

-Mb, San Francisco

From The Beat: The fact that you "can't wait to hit the street" is all we need to know about why you're facing the "same ol' shhh." Apparently, you like it, since you must know that doing the same as before will give the same as before — time in the box. Come on, MB, you write way too well to be thinking like this. Your description of what makes it hard to come home is one of the best we've read, even though it's only a few sentences. But when you write how much your mother has sacrificed for you (and because of you), then you must know it's time for you to do a little sacrificing for her. You absolutely know what she wants most from you, and that is you at home with her. That may not always be what you want, but it's time to put what you want second to what she wants. She deserves nothing less.

Health Dependent Choices

What's up with The Beat? It's ya boi Lil' Rob. I'm 'bout to tell you about choices you can make to help you change your life and stay healthy.

One choice you can make to stay healthy is to surround yourself around positive people and a positive environment so there will be less peer pressure to do drugs, alcohol, etc., feel me? Also, your body does depend on what choices you make because you have the power in your mind to deny drugs and alcohol which affects your health and life.

People don't realize their health problems 'til they find out, and when they do, they think about what they could have done to prevent these health problems.

Well, Beat, that's all I got for y'all today!

-Lil' Rob, San Francisco

From The Beats: What are you doing in your own life to make these healthy choices? Do you say no to drugs and —particularly— to alcohol? Since we think you're spitting some very important knowledge here, we hope you're listening to yourself!

RIP Monster

What's up Beat, this your boy Crazy from Oakland writing you once again.

The last time I visited the doctor was about two years ago, when I was on the block posting with the homies. I was dranking and smoking when a car passed by and started dumping!

Then one of my homies had got shot. He was lying down like he was dead. We called the ambulance, but before the ambulance came the cops showed up, and asked us what happened. I was trying to flip my homie over because he was choking on his blood... and then the cops told me to don't touch him. They pulled me away hella hard and his head hit the floor hella hard.

The cops was waiting for the ambulance, talking to each other about what they did last week, laughing and shhh while my homie was dying. We went to the hospital and the doctor told us he was going to make it, but when we left, they told us he died the next day in the morning.

That's the last time I seen a doctor. RIP Monster

-Crazy, Alameda

From The Beat: It must have been a nightmare for you, because you were just trying to help him...We wish the doctor hadn't led you to hope when there wasn't hope (although in this case, we would say that maybe it really did seem like he'd be OK, and then there was an unexpected complication.) But of course, the real issue is the life lost, which is the most enraging thing of all. What did you do after Monster died? Do you remember his funeral? Do you ever lie in bed and ask yourself how did it get to this point? With so much bloodshed, and so many tears? Thank you for honoring him in The Beat.

The Hard Part About Returning Home

It's hard returning home when you are going to the same place that took you away from your home in the first place. Then you go back to nothing and have to start over.

Well I can tell you how it feels to leave the max unit and come to camp. When you are in max you are around a whole lot of kids that are facing time, and you also may be facing time as well. At camp, the feeling is different. You are around kids that worry about a week-end home pass, not doing time in somebody's pen ...so you can deal with it all a little better up here.

I sit and look at kids cry about a home-pass and think about every one of my inmate friends coming back in to the unit with dried up tears, and some still crying as they come in and tell us they got 15 to life or life....Or they got charged with another case and I say damn, if the camp kids cry over a home pass, I can just imagine what lil' things they would cry over.

Camp is different from the max unit, because when you were in max you would have to grow up real fast and every body was real fast and every body was real and did not hate on one another now camp you got lying, hate and a whole lot of want-to-be's who, want to make a name for theyself so they fight some one and get there ass whipped.

It's funny the two places that are right by each other and do the same thing every day. This is to show everybody who is in camps or units that are not max units you think it's hard on you.... think about the kids they put far away from you 'cause they kill or did some thing to get thirty years to life.

-J-Weather, Alameda

From The Beat: We can see how it would be a shock coming to camp, where people actually act like teenagers, after being in a situation where young people are forced to face the possibility of never having a chance to even be "teenagers" again. We feel grateful that you got the advantage of the wisdom that comes from Max, along with the second chance and programs that come from Camp. It means we get to watch you put your new grown-man mindset so you can live a successful life, in honor of the people in camp who didn't get a second chance.

Stepping Outside

Before I step outside, I get ready by brushing my teeth to eating cereal. When I'm eating I open my door and I think and wonder if I'm going to have a good day or a bad one.

When I close my door I look across the street and I see an old lady looking at me through her window. I think to myself and wonder if she thinks I'm going to get shot or something.

I think she thinks I'm a bad kid in a good neighborhood. I wonder if she worries about me and hopes that I return home safe. Sometimes I see her talking to mom and I wonder what they're talking about. My mama never liked me leaving my house because she thought something would happen to me. My mom tells me not to wear too much red (or blue) but I still do.

My brother would sometimes come with me and kept me safe most of the time and wants me to hang out with him but I hang out with my homies. When I start to leave my house I look at more neighbors and I see them looking at me. I feel uncomfortable all the time.

When I walk my mom to the store or something and my neighbors look at my mom and it looks like they think she raised a bad child. But my mom didn't raise a bad child, I chose my life but I'm going to change it for her and me.

-Desmond, Alameda

From The Beat: Everybody chooses how to live there own life. We're not here to tell you how to live either but we want you to realize that there's more to life than just gangbanging or coming to places like these. We hope you do change and quit causing your mom so much stress. You can do anything you set your mind to, so as long as you feel it in your heart to change then it can be done.

A Healthy Life

A healthy life means you got your money up and living right — bad female, a fat house and you don't have anything to worry about, nothing. Go to church if you want a healthy life. God will look out for you, trust. Just believe and keep yo' head up, and God will lead you to a healthy life.

Me, I'm looking at a healthier life for sure when I get out because God by my side and I'm go keep Him by my side. Not just while I'm up in here, but when I get out too. That's my word 'cause this shhh ain't the code! That's what a healthy life means to me.

-Monsta, San Francisco

From The Beats: We sure hope you can keep the promise you make here to live by God's code on the outs, because that is a prescription for a healthy life, and one lived in freedom. When you were on the outs before, were you not keeping god by your side? Is that what led you to do whatever it was that brought you here? Well, looking backwards is only helpful if it changes the view when you look forwards. It's what lies ahead that counts.

Worse Off Than You (Part Two)

Dirge looks at his friend Lecter in a calm spirit.

"Why, and how?" Dirge says.

"I hadn't been feeling well I went to the doctors office and Doctor Higami said I was diagnosed with the disease." Lecter paused, then carried on. "I don't know what I'm going to do?"

"Just don't worry, you'll get through this." Dirge encouraged.

"Thanks," Lecter replied. They hugged like bears trying to keep each other warm. Dirge felt so shocked that his friend was about to be laying on his death bed.

Dirge now looks at life differently, not so much focusing on the small things in life, but big things like life.

-Young Voice, Alameda

From The Beat: This is amazing - and sad as well, did this short story come from your life experience, your imagination, or a little bit of both? We are holding our breaths for the next installment, and will try to remember to look at life differently, as this piece teaches.

The Hard Part

The hard part of returning home is the part when you come back (here, to juvy). You come back because you're doing the same thing that got you in, and because you're dedicated to the lifestyle. In your mind you're telling yourself that you "can't stop..." until you end up dead, or in prison for life.

-Lifestyle of the young and foolish

From The Beat: Are you a sheep, or a young man with a mind of your own? If someone told you to go for a walk in heavy traffic, or to jump from the top of a ten story building, you'd know that was crazy. You wouldn't do it. You didn't come up with the idea that you can't stop... mentality. You heard that from others. It's an equally bad idea. And who, with a mind of his own, would voluntarily buy into that dumb idea? Fact is, you can stop. Whether you will stop is up to you. But it's difficult for us to believe that the intelligent fellow who wrote the piece above (that would be you) actually wants to end up dead, or, spending his life in prison, all because he's bought into a very dumb idea.

The Challenge Of Going Home

The biggest challenge for me is to go home on the bracelet because I can't do anything when I'm on the monitor. I can't go with the homies and drink-up and just kick it. And I have to stay home and just watch TV. Watching TV doesn't help me. I don't learn anything. But when I'm with the homies I learn a lot of things. It sucks when I'm on the bracelet. I have to go to the evening center, even on the weekend, and I can't go to my girl's house. She is gonna have to come to my house.

-George

From The Beat: What kinds of things do you learn when you're with the homies? We agree with you that TV is mostly a waste of time, but have you discovered how much fun reading can be? It's really true. Try this. Sit down and make a list of ten questions you'd like to know the answers to. Then think hard about those questions for a few days. Look at the list often. Narrow the questions down to three. When you get home, ask your mom, or your girl, to go to the library. Have her show the three questions you're most interested in to the "reference librarian". The reference librarian will recommend a stack of books that will help you answer your questions. We guarantee that you'll learn a lot about what you're interested in by reading those books. Learning about what you're interested in is fun. Try it. You'll see.

The Hard Part About Returning Home

I have no worries.

Whatever happens on the outs happens for a reason.

I like the life I live.

Maybe someday it will hit me that I want to change, but for now I'm living the only life I know.

I'll be going back to the same streets I grew up in.

I just hope that I don't end up in prison for the rest of my life, and regretting the life

I chose. I might have something better in life to do, but I don't know what it is yet.

-Kevin

From The Beat: You do have something better to do. We know you've imagined a better life than you've had, up 'til now. Maybe you haven't dared to express it, because you think some folks would laugh. Believe us - those are not the folks you want to listen to. You are a human being. Human beings dream. And human beings who work hard and have the courage to try to make their dreams come true are often surprised at how wonderful life can be. Be daring Kevin. Think, dream, and then do. You'll surprise yourself. We guarantee it.

Mental Health

Mental health means nothing to me. I think that's just a place where they put crazy people. Like when they are really messed up in the head.

I also think the counselors are the ones that need counseling because sometimes they don't even know what they are talking about. They don't even help the juveniles out. They just talk to them like nothing's happening....

-Mentally confident

From The Beat: Hey, talk is often the best therapy around, and it's certainly the cheapest. We're sorry you feel that way about some of your counselors. But our observations are that your counselors do care about you. Everyone can have a bad day, even the greatest counselors on the planet. So, if you feel a bit unloved by one of your counselors on a particular day, try to imagine that the counselor probably isn't having a very good day, either. Give him or her a break. They'll appreciate your understanding. (And don't forget the breaks they've given you.)

Those Arms

Those arms were so real even though it was in a dream.

The boxer started in on me with a flurry of fists.

They were like large sacks of stones.

And soon I was in a headlock

applied with such force

it left me with a terrible scar.

I took my beating so gracefully it was unexplainable to the cops.

-Nathan

From The Beat: You're just a brave guy, whether dreaming or awake. And we like your poem. We look forward to more. Hit us with a flurry of poems. We can take it.

Afraid To Go Home?

I'm not really afraid to go home. The only thing I want to do is go home and live my life better so I can have a good time with hainas and homies, and live my life to the fullest.

-B Boy

From The Beat: The big question is: what changes will you make so that you can live your life better? Now is the time to make a list of practical things you can do that will help to keep you free. Having a good time with the hainas and the homies sounds good, but what does that mean? Did that kind of a good time land you in juvy, or was it something else? Think carefully about what you need to do. Then do it.

Talk Is Dead

Talk is something I don't do and I'm not trying to, because talk kills. Homeboys that talk get killed. So I'm just saying that talking to someone or somebody sometimes gets you killed. Also when you talk they promise all these fools heaven, and if they believe it, it's all bad, but these fools don't admit it.

-B

From The Beat: What some folks call 'snitching' is very different from 'talk'. For thousands of years, we humans have felt the need to talk to one another. And usually, when we're having a difficult time, we're especially in need of good talk. It is important to be talking with the right person, though. It's best to talk with someone who won't make judgments about you, someone who will just be a good listener. We do understand your reluctance to talk. But our suggestion is to find the right person to listen. And then unload, knowing that you're talking to someone who can maintain your trust. You'll feel much better after you've gotten things off your chest.

Mental Health

What I have done and seen and where I am heading in my life is healthy, in some ways. I keep my life healthy by doing something that makes me happy and by doing what I like to do. What I've done doesn't really make me healthy, but now I am, because I'm in here.

I'm heading in the right direction for my health but not for myself. My healthy habits are eating right and exercising every day or every other day. My body is fine because I am using my mind and using my mind is making my life healthy. The relationships I have keep my mind healthy and my mind keeps my body healthy. The clouds make my mind go and make me think of different situations. There are things I've done that don't make me healthy - the drugs and wrong things I have done, and making people feel bad.

-Damian

From The Beat: You say you're healthy now because you're "in here". We're guessing you mean that while you're in juvy you can't use drugs. But you'll be released eventually, and then what? Will you return to an unhealthy lifestyle? What will keep you away from drugs besides being locked up? Life is full of choices. Healthy people learn how to make healthy choices. What's your plan for making healthier choices?

What's Up Beat

It's your homie Smokey, still in these ALACO walls in this maximum security unit. What's up with it? Well I got four months left after this month over. I got to do what's right in order to go home... So I'm going to hold it together. To all incarcerated hold your head up high, strive for your future. I've been going to jail since 2004 as a youngster.

I've lost so much time with my family friends. I'll admit I had fun but I wasted so much time. I'm just trying to say your future is so important you don't want to be locked up for your whole life. I'm doing a ten-month bid and it's hard and I can't wait to get out. And when I do, my future will start up again. I'm doing a ten-month bid and hitting the street in 2008. I'll be out June 10, 2008. I must be responsible I got to be a man.

-Smokey

From The Beat: You are not kidding about being more responsible. You did what you did and your future begins right now. All the decisions you make now will affect your future. Do your time don't let it do you. Learn from this experience. Your freedom is very valuable. When you get back out on them streets remember how much time you've wasted already. We know you don't want to waste anymore time.

Cut it Short

Well peep game it's yo' boy Lil' Tiger up in these walls with the homies keeping it solid. I should be out of here in two weeks, so I ain't tripping off nothing. But to all those facing road blocks in the game, just ride it out like a savage. But I'm about to cut it short.

-Lil' Tiger

From The Beat: Um, we'd say don't ride it out like a savage, right it out with courage, the courage to do what's right, stay out of the drama, and get support from people that are positive. Otherwise, it's more than a piece that might get cut short.

The Hard Part

This is my first time in here. The challenge I face when I get home is adapting to everything because I might be in here for a while. What I worry about when I get home is hoping that my mom is still alive because she has health problems. She only has one kidney. She goes to dialysis every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Who been helping with my everyday need is my family and my girlfriend. My mom has challenges taking care of her children who's always arguing and fighting.

-Kevin

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear about your mom. She sounds like a strong woman. You need to stop messing around and getting in trouble so you can be out there looking out for your mom and the rest of your family. Forget the streets, look what misery they brought you and your poor mother.

Doctor

Doctor doctor
Please save my wife
Doctor doctor

If you let her die I might kill you cause you should've tried

Doctor doctor
You don't want no beef you got an M.D you ain't from the streets

Doctor doctor
Why you?

Are you wearing all white?

-Young Boe

From The Beat: Why would you kill the doctor? What if the doctor gives it everything he got why would you kill somebody that's only trying to help? That's not gonna bring back your wife from the dead.

Sick With The Flow

I'm so sick give me a LBN let me in
Dark blue colors, blow up TNT, CNN
I been around like a farmer and, yes I am
I could do whatever I want sorta like a Mexican
Nurse I'm sick and there's no cure
365 days, 30 marks you do to dogs of four years
Got patience, hearts pacing body got armor on it
running it's pacing

But I can't fill it

Iced out like a grill on a hot day
Hot like the oven red beans sitting on a hot plate
Yoga man, wrap me up like a present
But I repeat, everyone who's present
I'm here homie, leave a ninja lonely

Fry 'em up like rice or roni

Leave 'em so they in the back of the club and get away homie!

The mail man, Hell man, Bail man,
Knock a ninja down tall this stupid punk fell man,
Flip the game like clovers

Fold ya' then have my dog drink y'all up like Folgers
Step and stones, you could say I keep walking, lay the game and it's cutting

Have it bleeding, have it coughing.

-Boe

From The Beat: You might be sick wit the flow/ But you ain't slick on yo' toes/ If you writing for The Beat that means you got caught up by them poes/ What kind of message through yo' flow are you trying to impose/ Here's a lil' proposition that we trying to propose/ Why don't you stop getting caught up and start doing something right/ And instead of writing flows in the halls, why don't you just spit 'em over a mic/

People Wonder Why

People wonder why I act crazy, because I don't care about nothing

I will hurt anybody that mess with me staff asking me why I act like that
because you don't know I what I am going through. So I tell them to screw themselves because I don't give a shhh.

I know that I am crazy they tell me I need to start talking to someone... but I'm cool, I just need a release.

-Lil' Chuy

From The Beat: This piece makes us wonder why for sure, because it cracks with anger and history. You must have been through some serious living - and we bet you have a real story to tell. Maybe you need a release that's not just physical but also mental...?

The Hard Part About Returning Home

For me the hard part about returning home is getting used to new surroundings and what to look out for. It's also hard to return home when your feeling guilty about what you did to get in jail so you might not want to face your family. But you can't run from your problems. If you do they wont go away. It will also be hard to return home there's somebody out waiting to kill you. That's why going home can be a good thing but in a way to others it can be a bad thing. But for me it's going to be a good thing because when I get out I'm going to do whatever it takes to not come back here. But I hope when I do get home, I'm going to need someone by my side because I don't want to be alone!

-Looking for a partna

From The Beat: Nobody wants to be alone but just be safe and smart when you go back out on the streets. Get a job and if you are lucky, you'll find a nice lady who will keep you focused. Do whatever it takes to not come back, but even though you're gonna face difficult challenges be patient and stay focused.

Doctor

I had a doctor that was so ignorant that I went to Children's Hospital for a broken toe. Well in the x-rays there was no break. I have very big growth plates well kind of expected at 250 lbs 6 foot. Well this doctor was so ignorant that he decides to put a whole cast on my entered leg because of a broken toe.

Nonetheless, the reason why he was ignorant was because he put a pink cast on my leg. I asked for black the relished about halfway through the process that he messed up put pink on. My mom was laughing. The position I was in I couldn't understand, because the position he had me laying well after about thirty minutes of laying on a bed. I stand up look down see my leg covered in pink. My mom told me "owe well just here to cheer you up."

I basically had to walk around for two an half months. I went back to the Children's Hospital got more x-rays they informed me that my toe was still broken they put another cast on my leg this time about 2 and half inch past my knee well I had a the color I wanted this time (black).

After about another two months the doctor's called my house and told me I have to go come back to get the cast removed because they messed up when they looked at the x-rays. Basically told me I have big growth plates my toe wasn't broken to begin with so I said screw you and started clipping away at the cast with wire cutters.

-Pink cast, Black cast

From The Beat: Man that sounds like an annoying visit to the doctors. But we all make mistakes. Even doctors can make mistakes, and just be glad it wasn't anything too serious.

How I Got My Scar

When I was twelve years old I was at elementary school. I was playing when I really wasn't supposed to.

I was playing football when Mrs. Edwards opened the door and I ran into the door and I busted my head/ I had to go to the hospital and get 29 stitches on my forehead! Then the doctor said that I couldn't to sleep in 24 hours ...or else I wouldn't not wake up. That's my story on how I got my scar.

-Dominique

From The Beat: Wow, what a close call. What did you do to stay up for 24 hours? Do you remember being really sleepy?

I Feel Sick

I feel sick but not sick like illness

You must be made of Novocain if you can't feel this

All the beautiful ladies in the world

Different colors and sweet like ice cream swirls

They're easy to love cause of the things they do

They say its one for everybody have you found the one for you

I know its one for me

'Cause I see her in my dreams

Her build is five-three sort of like a coke bottle
She's pretty and smart way better than a top model

She has beauty mark above her upper lip

Every thing is just right from her head to her hips

One day I'm gonna run into my sexy

I believe God sent her from above

Like Selena I'm dreaming of her every night

She comes soon as my eyes close tight.

-Young Mari

From The Beat: What kind of sick do you feel? Is it homesick? No, how bout love sick, which is understandable, given where you sit tonight.

Fed Up

People get murdered on my street
Every turf filled with envy and deceit

Everybody racing to eat

Ninjas bust guns so it ain't no getting you're ass beat

Now and days people too scared to compete

Too scared to go head up.

All they do is put that led up.

The whole hood fed up

Everybody dogged so they pissing with one leg up

That's real.

-Big Weezy

From The Beat: Everybody fed up with all the violence that's going on in the streets? Aren't you tired? You're not tired watching everybody die? You don't care that maybe one day your kids are gonna be growing up in this environment? What can you youngstas do to try to prevent all this? What can you do? All it takes is one person. If each individual would sit there and worry more about themselves then the next man, maybe there wouldn't be that much senseless killing.

The Hard Part

The hard part is the hood and the money. It's the temptation that's calling you back. If you been doing it all your life and that's all you know, then that's all you going to want to do.

Unless you been to jail a lot and you getting tired of coming and want to change. But yeah it's hard returning home also because say if you trying to be cool and you want to change sometimes people going to try you like just because you changing you aint going to get down and get active.

That's when you get down on a ninja. But other then that it's going to be real tempted to go back to the hood. Just like me I'm about to be down for a minute and when I get out that shhh gonna be tempting so I got to just change my environment.

-Roland

From The Beat: Everything is hard basically when you really put it like the way you're putting it. But it's up to you to realize and pick and choose yo' battles. You can't go around and pick fights with everybody that might not like you. You just have to be the bigger man and ignore all those haters. You don't have to prove nothing to nobody man. Just go about your business and stay away from the haters.

Back to the Life

The day when I get out I'm going back to the life. The hard part about going home is about illegal things to get dough.

-Maurice

From The Beat: Knowing how bad it is, and how it lands you back in jail, doesn't that make you wonder if going back to "the life" is really where you want to go? Think of how much you've already suffered because of it.

Life

To me, life don't mean nothin'. But then again, it means a lot to me because I want to have a good life and go to college and get a degree in Law and Order and play pro football and be the first out of my mother's kids to have a degree and playing sports...

But most of all what I want out of life is to live and be able to dream. I love life but then again I don't. But I do want to be alive to see my brother get out of CYA!!

-Lil' Miami

From The Beat: It sounds from this that life does mean a lot to you... you have man-sized ambitions: The desire to get schooling, be there to see the brother you love, play sports... be someone your family can be proud of. These are all challenging goals, but you can meet them if you want to. What gets in the way of success? What steps would you need to take to become all these things?

Honest Thoughts

When I return home I don't even know what's gonna go on.

I'm gonna try and complete my program but honestly my intentions are for mo' dough. Man, All I do is run the streets, attempt to stay tucked

This government want my body stuck

I'm trapped in the ruff of grimy being a criminal ain't even my nature

I'm constantly on the run figuring out new ways to paper.

Best believe if I'm broke

Illegal activity in my life becomes a factor.

ALACO Juvenile Hall ain't gonna see me bra

I'm kicking one in a vehicle or on foot but forget that I'm really letting you in on my out of jail struggles.

I be running from programs unable to get legit work cause my social security shows

I'm running from the enforcers.

That's why I be forcing marijuana wrapped in swishers inside that damage my lungs it helps me cope with the hell of this failing planet

and also helps block th0e trauma of having the mind of a rebel, bandit.

I cant stand it

at times I wish I can leave this planet go start my own perfect world on a whole nother planet

. So when I return home I ain't gonna be worried I'm gonna clock dollars aka curi slash guda.

-Lil' Young

From The Beat: We feel you on the wish to make a better world on another planet - but of course this one is all we've got for now. Like Bob Marley says, "you can't run away from yourself." So tell us this, what is it that makes you run from your programs each time, especially because you already know that it forces you into more danger, criminality and pain, "unable to get legit work."

RIP Mall

I'm going to write about my ninja Mall. Jamal got kill by the gun. It's like people say you live by the gun you die by the gun. My ninja was staying with me before he died, so it hit me out of nowhere. We didn't know he had problems with some other ninjas until one of the girls said he had came to the block before he got killed. He said he needed a gun.

So he went to go look for a gun but they found him, and it was too late. I remember I was, driving and I saw a body on the ground. And I stopped, but the police was pulling up so I went to the corner I got out of the car and the police was putting the yellow tape, and that's how I found out about my ninja Mall.

RIP Mall always will be missed but never forgotten I love you bra bra your boy...

-Lil' Nacho Cheese

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear about your friend. Why is there so much violence going on in the streets? Why does everybody feel like they need a gun? What if there were no guns? How would one solve their+ problems?

Sick Of Being Lonely

I am so sick of being lonely, being left alone and neglected by my boo. I am trying to let her know I am true, but she catting off like she ain't got a clue, sooner or later she going to be left looking like a fool, so wise up boo, otherwise we through.

-Sexy and Sophisticated

From The Beat: Is this relationship stress something that started since you've been here? How has being in jail affected your relationship? She must feel alone and neglected too, with you being locked up...

Favorite Doctor

My favorite doctor has been Dr. Karen, and she has been there for me every since I was a little kid and she has also been my doctor.

Even though I'm in here, but on the outs she is also my family's doctor and we truly trust her because she knows what she's is doing and I'm also having a baby.

-Dr. Karen's patient

From The Beat: Family doctor's are wonderful. We hope Dr. Karen will help you in taking the right steps to being a responsible father. And when your child is born he/she too will be going to Dr. Karen.

On The Greyhound...

The hard part about me returning home is because I sometimes don't want to be bothered with the same people every day. I wanna see new people and learn new things. I live to travel around the world and be myself. I can't stay in one place for long. I need to move around.

I like to sometimes get on the grayhound and go somewhere far, somewhere with a lot of people and lights. Sometimes when I get irritated I like to be alone and don't come by for a couple of days. My mother always wonders where I'm at. I give her one phone call a week or once a month. That's why it's hard for me.

-Phantell

From The Beat: You're a loner! And an adventurer, Getting lost, and grabbing a backpack and a notebook and a one way ticket to anywhere, is one of the greatest experiences a person can have, and one day we hope you'll get to do it. But it won't work if you're running away from your life, and running away from unfinished business... But if you finish high school and get a good job or go to college, be sure to contact The Beat so we can let you know about some programs that will help pay you to take a trip to Mexico or Africa of the far East, just for local teens. Peace.

My Case

My case been going bad for the last I don't know how many months but, now things are coming to a change and they're turning around getting better.

The case is starting to be in my favor and I'm getting glad, but the only thing I don't know is how long is things going to go in my favor without going sour. But for right now, thing are turning around so I hope it stays like that.

-Marcus

From The Beat: Well we wish you the best of luck on your case. But just stay positive and hopefully positive things will come. Be prepared for the worst and hope for the best.

In And Out Of My Life

Out of my life then in

So I'm gone write about it to The Beat Within

She comes and goes I feel like I need her

Mary Jane no real woman can be her

When I was out she was there for me for 10 dollars

And I can get her anytime

When she gets inside my lungs it makes her happy

I call it Mary Jane some people call it grand daddy

Every time I get out Mary Jane is the first person I get in touch with

It's hard to stop so I guess it's Mary Jane I'm stuck with

When I come here Mary goes away gone for so long

Mary won't stay soon as I get out I'm gone

Get Mary and then her best friend swisher ya heard me.

-Young Mari

From The Beat: Why would you trust a girl like Mary Jane? Why would you trust anybody that's only interested in your ten dollars and altering your mind?

From Boys To Men

What's good Beat it's ya boy Lil' Dave just chilling here, yeah still in this hall. It's hella bootsy, ain't nothin' changed but these weak staff every 8 hours.

They really don't know how it feels, being locked up 24 hours in a day, so therefore sometimes we may have attitudes. Maybe the staff that just last was on got on our last nerves, and then they come in with they messed up attitude, it tempts us to see what kinda mood we in.

Sometimes we flash, but that doesn't get us anywhere because all they gonna do is keep us in the room. So either way it go, we gotta suck up to them or be cool.

Well I know that from being in jail isn't supposed to be fun or being in a good mood but we can't be mad or upset forever. My biggest fear is getting back out there and doing the wrong thing. I really don't want that for myself... I want positive and going in the right direction and surroundings myself with good and supporting people.

My worst enemy is myself. Forget everybody else. If I focus on myself I can be a better person to live and dream and accomplish.

-Lil' Dave

From The Beat: You start off this piece complaining about all the stuff you can't control (lockdown, staff, etc...) but by the end of it you've dug deep into your own soul and what you CAN control. Yes, if you focus on yourself, and the positive things that you really want, you can have that better life you seek, where no staff controls your life, where you can find the things you want.

Where I'm From

I'm going to write about my hood where I was raised. The hood I'm from is a real ugly site. The real projects, home of the thugs and much drugs. The way I see it every body is addicted to something. Either you buying or selling man this world is corrupted.

-Lance

From The Beat: This world is corrupted. And that's one way to look at it, you either buying or selling. But how about looking at from another point of view? How about you're either going to jail or not going to jail? And you already know what the business is. You can either be one of them dudes that keeps coming in and out of jail all your life. Or you can be one of them dudes that gets out and never comes back.

Returning Home

Returning home is going to be hard for me because I am going to be 18 years old.

That's going to mean that I'm on my own. I have an 18 month old daughter, so its going to be me and my baby. I'm not going right home yet, I'm going to a group home. So I have to do it on my own. Right now I'm kind of not wanting to leave here. I'm not ready to do it on my own.

-The King's Wife

From The Beat: We know you can do it. You have the love for your daughter, your family, your desire to step into womanhood. Keep us posted, send us pictures!

Returning Home Is Not Easy

The hard part about returning home is this juvenile justice system. Once you own 707 status you could kiss home good bye. That's when staff get shady though. I cant wait 'till I hit 18, so I could be just doing my time instead of wasting it but until then I'm chillin' wit ma ninjas.

-Seron

From The Beat: You're right, sometimes it's not easy returning home because of your alleged crime. But you have to fight for a way out. It's all on you. You can let yourself be trapped or you can fight your way out. Hopefully you have some fight in you!

Getting Caught Up

The hardest part is getting out there and staying out of the way. People find themselves in a situation where it's hard to do right. Getting caught up is not what we look forward to. The things we look at as petty shhh, end up getting us locked up. Sometimes our past cases come in the way with our current releases. \

So for all y'all up in this place keep ya heads up and learn from your mistakes.

-Lil' Mousie

From The Beat: You're definitely right about trying to stay out of trouble and we know that a lot of you youngstas get caught up for petty things. But you have to learn from your mistakes and figure if you keep doing what you doing you only gonna keep coming back. So what you gotta do is switch up game plans. You have to do whatever it takes for you to not come back here. Whether it be staying away from negative people or whatever it is that's bringing you here. Good luck and remember you have to be focused.

Illegal relationships

What's up The Beat? I'm gonna tell it like this, from experience... Now a days, everybody is in illegal relationships. What I mean by illegal is the age difference between the two people. I hate the fact that people look so down upon a relationship where one person involved is older than the other person. Say a 15 year old is involved with a 26 year old.

Everybody who sees the relationship from the outside doesn't approve. "She's (or he's) too young" they say. "That person should be in jail." I don't understand why it's so wrong to be in an 11-year difference relationship.

Now if they were 21 and 32 nobody would care. To me, it's so hypocritical. The world is so messy that people really gonna worry about how old somebody is? This is the stuff that irritates me. Well, I'm in an illegal relationship and if you don't like it, screw you.

-Domonique

From The Beat: Sounds like you have a lot of experience in this area, and it's clearly something that really frustrates you. So what would you change about this law? What do you think should happen if a very young teenage girl is dating a 30 year old man? Or a very young teenage boy with a 40 year old woman? When is a relationship with a minor a healthy relationship, and when is it child abuse? One of the reasons these laws exist is to protect young people from adults who may be manipulating them, or abusing them, both psychologically and sexually. Have you ever seen this happen?

Pins And Needles

Four walls, nurse calls

Walk in have a seat, you see this room is neat
Wait for hours it seem you hope this doctor isn't mean
Come in with a needle like a fiend your mind starts to
scream

He rubs some stuff on your skin you think your life
'bout to end

Suddenly it enters in like a rush to catch the bus
Or some one holding your nuts or a bubble bout to bust
Your mind is racing, your eyes are gazing your blood is
blazing

And you think you 'bout to die
Then you open your eyes and to your surprise

It seems to be an up rise
And you feel a hand on your thighs
And you look over you shoulder
It's over.

-Afraid Of Shots

From The Beat: Pins and needles equals pain, unless you're getting treated for something. Interesting poem, what are you trying to tell us?

The Hard Part About Returning Home

Well I don't know what it is like to return home after being in jail. Because it's really the first time I spent this much time in jail. But what really worries me is how I gone get to start over or how I'm gone start where I left from. Hopefully things change. But only God knows and if you go back to your old ways then that's the way you wanna live your life!

Also another thing that worries me how I'm gone start in school how things are different from jail to the outs.

-Rauzzy

From The Beat: You're definitely right about it not being easy making the transition from jail to the outs. Everything does change from the moment you get out. It's a brand new start. And it's up to you whether you wanna make a life out of coming in and out of jail. Remember it's your choice. Nobody is forcing you to do anything. If you like going to jail then that's on you.

The Spot

Man the spot is home to me when I am on the spot. I feel warm no matter how cold it is. I feel safe when I am on the spot everybody knows who I am. My closest friends are on the spot holding it down as we speak. Even though I been shot at on the spot, jumped on the spot, I still call it the spot and I love it.

It's home to me if you show me a picture of the spot I am gonna tell you that's the spot. I am gonna tell you man that's home. And that's my spot, my home for those people who don't know Oakland that's my home all day.

-Limit

From The Beat: What else goes on at the spot besides violence? How would you like to die on the spot? How does that sound? That's basically what you telling us right? You like getting shot at, you like getting jumped, then have fun at yo' spot homie.

A Healthy Life

Well I think my life is healthy, but also my choice of life style isn't as healthy. Like I make sure I take care of myself, and my family to the best of my abilities. I exercise on a daily basis to make sure I stay in shape. Basketball, and football, are hobbies of mine also. But, on the other hand my lifestyle is not that healthy. But it's also a way some people help take care of their families or help themselves get by and live life. That's why I say that I live a healthy life but I have an unhealthy lifestyle.

-K Chill

From The Beat: Maybe you have split lifestyles. Exercising and eating good is healthy. But also drinking and smoking everyday or popping pills and doing drugs isn't healthy. Also risking your freedom and life by hanging on the street is not healthy either. You need to make up your mind and figure out how long you want to live 'cause we don't need to tell you what the outcome is for living an unhealthy lifestyle.

A Healthy Life From Jail To The Outs!

Well I'm gon' start off by saying I think by being in juvenile hall it's way more healthier because you don't have all those bad things that keep you from not being healthy like drugs, junk food, and etc.

In jail you gone have to do everything they tell you to. Like for this instant like when you gone get a work out. And believe me when I say this too. You gon' be begging for mercy, but the food is way more healthier than all the rest of the food we are use too.

-Rauzzy

From The Beat: You have an interesting point. But you don't have to be in jail to live a healthy lifestyle. If you had your freedom you can do whatever you want. You can play sports, go to the gym, do whatever. Life is all about choices. Everybody chooses how they want to live their life. You don't have to eat unhealthy on the outs. You have an even more variety of food on the outs than you do in jail.

Doctor's Appointment

The last time I went to the doctor was January 8, 2008. I got a physical and my depo shot. I like some doctors but others I don't, cause some are gentle and some are not.

I hope to be a doctor someday. I think that I would be a good doctor and be more gentle and understanding than most doctors. And I think that my patients would really like me. I'm very smart and I care about people.

-Alisha

From The Beat: We think you would make a great doctor. But this means a lot of work... Are you up for the challenge, the long hours, and the dedication? We think you could be! One thing that would help is if you find a mentor when you get out (at your school or in your community) who knows what you need to do to prepare for medical school, and who can help you get started.

To My Unborn

Looking at the wall thinking about my life
Wondering if my lady and son is alright

I miss my son by the day
Lord knows I care

Sitting behind the doors is unfair

I hope I'm there before your born

In here it feels like daddy is torn

I swear wit' my hand up to God

Daddy won't leave until I'm called by the hand of God

To my unborn.

-Dreedy Boy

From The Beat: This is a sweet poem for your unborn son. You should mail it to your girl. You have to stay strong and finish up your program so you can go home to your new life. Take this time to realize how valuable your freedom is.

Untitled

Dear Beat, this Sexy, just here to say hi. Well, it's going on a little over three months and I am still here. Hopefully I'll be leaving in February but if not I am still going to keep doing me. Regardless of whether I go or I stay, I am still going to do what I got to do to stay cute.

Anyway my lil' female about to leave and I am kind of sad but happy for her at the same time because, she about to be out and doing her. All I can do is pray for her and wish her the best.

She say she going to write me but I don't know, will see though.

Anyway God bless y'all going to court and be safe to those getting out!

-Sexy and Sophisticated

From The Beat: What do you think you need to do to stay cute? Is it cute to be in jail? Is it cute to be on parole? We'd like to see you doing things that you need to stay FREE! What is your plan to stay out of jail?

What It Do Beat

What's good Beat this is your girl Jacqueline just want to tell y'all that I'm not leaving until March 12, 2008 but that is OK 'cause it only a month and a half away.

But I know I can make it 'cause I'm doing good in this unit. People are helping me make it, like DB and Underwood and Ms. Banks.

But I know I am going to get out of here and stay home if I do go home but I just see what's going to happen if I go home or to a group home.

-Jaqueline

From The Beat: Remember that going to a group home is the same as going home - it's just taking a longer road instead of the short cut. We're glad you feel like people are helping you. You deserve lots of support and love from people who see the true you and want to encourage it.

Can't Wait Almost There

What's good with The Beat? It's the Enaloca again.

Well I got a release on Wednesday the 16th on EM but I'm still here. I just can't wait I'm anxious to get out but there's a hold up and now I might have to be in here longer 'cause my PO have to make another court date so the judge can see what else they gonna do with me since EM might not work.

I just want to get out so I can hurry up and do what I must do with my life like go get my GED and a drivers permit so in several months when I turn 18 I can just do the behind the wheel test and get my license off top and I want to get a job. So yup, basically I can't wait to get out.

I'm tired of being locked away in my room with nobody to talk to and nothing to entertain me. It's hecka boo boo but I'm hangin' like wall paper and I'm almost there. One love and I'm out.

-Enaloca

From The Beat: Good luck with your release. Hope you can focus on these plans you have. What are the challenges you think you'll have to deal with when you get out, and do you have a plan for how you will deal with them?

Missing Everything

What's good wit' it Beat? This be Tweety. Well, I'm writing you again. I still haven't been home. They kept me in here. I'm hella mad, but oh well.

Anyways, I miss my boyfriend Carlos and I know he misses me too. I'm young and I know I sound stupid but I feel like I found Mr. Right. Other people might say I'm too young and barely living my life but that's just how I feel. Well, don't get me wrong, I miss my mom and my big bro but to me I just feel like they don't care.

The only people that wrote me was a homegirl, nobody else. All I know is that's messed up that when I was out they said if I ever did get locked up that they were gonna write me but now that I'm in here there's only two people writing.

Well Beat, I just thought I let you know how I feel.

-Oakland Tweety

From The Beat: Tweety, you've experienced the hard lesson of jail—people don't write often, and once you are inside, it can be hard to get out. Has this made you determined to stay out? When you say "I can't stop ..." this makes us worried that perhaps you aren't focused on staying free, but rather on maintaining your attitude and lifestyle. Are we wrong to assume that? Are you willing to do what it takes to stay out of jail, and in the arms of your Mr. Right?

Don't Judge

Please don't judge me if you ain't done nothing for me.

I feel so lonely like I have no family.

The world is cold and so am I

Growing strong, old and bold

I feel like the devil stole my soul

But I'm for revenge and hell ain't gonna end until I get it.

-The Devil's Daughter

From The Beat: There is a lot of sadness and anger in this piece. It left a chill when we read the last line. Are you really willing to give up your freedom in the name of revenge? From experience, we've seen that this will only make the world colder and lonelier than it already seems...

Big Challenge

I think that getting out of jail is no easy challenge. Even though things may seem like they are too difficult to overcome there's always a way.

-Ba

From The Beat: Life isn't easy, but if you want it, then you have to earn it and work hard to gain the rewards.

The Hard Part About Returning Home

Next month on the 12th of February I will be getting released. I'm getting released on my 18th birthday. I won't be going home, I will be going to a program for 18-24 year olds. I'm glad that I have somewhere to go when I get out because I really don't want to go home. I've been taking care of myself since the age of 14 and a half and I don't want to go to my ex. I'll end back here if I do.

I'm really looking forward to going to this program. One reason is because the program is in Oakland, so I will still be able to see my friends and family. Plus, when I leave to go on pass I will know where I'm going. Another reason why I can't wait is 'cause when I leave the program I will be able to get an affordable apartment, which will only be about \$100 or \$200 a month. I'm going to do a good program so I can be able to live my life with a place to stay, a job, and many other good things. I would be able to live independently. And this time I'm not going to mess up.

-Cobbra

From The Beat: You are starting a new chapter Cobbra, as an adult, and as a free woman. You sound confident, determined and excited. Wonderful! But have you sat down and figured out what you need to do to not "mess up"? If your friends are in Oakland, does that mean your ex will be there too? If so, how will you deal with that? And will your friends support your desire to focus on your future? We hope so.

Hard Part About Going Home

Hard part 'bout going home is this: I might have to face the same problems that put me in here the 1st place. And on top, my dad is coming home from prison. It's good and bad at the same time. Good, because it would be nice to have him home. Bad, because my family has got major problems. But I look mad forward to working out my home life out so I can be a satisfied, happy person.

-Lela

From The Beat: You have some challenging times ahead of you, Lela. But you sound like you are up for it! Do you have a plan for how you are going to stay away from the problems that brought you in here? Or strategies for keeping you focused on what is important?

I'm Getting Released

Man, what's good with you Beat? Anyways, with me, I'm about to get released this week! I'm juiced right about now.

My PO came to visit me today and said that I got accepted to the group home. I'm tired of coming back and fourth to juvie. I've been away from my family for hella long.

It's time to change my mind frame and change my ways and get my act together.

When I get to this group home I'm about to do my program and not be tempted by anybody or anything. I can't wait to get to this group home and do my program.

I'm about to leave my girl behind and I'm gonna hella miss her with my heart. She's been the only one down with me while I've been incarcerated. I care about her dearly and I know she feels the same way about me. Anyway I just pray that she gets out 'cause she been through some shhh and she been in here several months and ain't got a interview yet.

Anyway I'm about to go so this will probably be the last time that I write y'all. This time I'm serious when I say the last time

-About To Go

From The Beat: We are excited for you as well! It sounds like you are ready to start a new chapter, and we wish you the best of luck. If you can keep this positive energy and determination in you, we know you'll be able to do great things!

Life

Well life sucks right now because of where I am at, and the choices I've made.

I wish I wouldn't have made the choices I made when I was on the streets.

Smoking weed is coo' but not when you're on probation. So you know what I mean. The people I chose to kick it with was the wrong group.

I will always love and respect my homies, but I know they are the reason

I am sitting in the hall right now. Not just them but me too.

I have smoked weed (aka purple) for a long time now, but it's time I stop and changed my life.

All my problems started when my mom and dad separated.

I don't want to talk about that....

But the path I am going to take when I get back is getting a job and stopping everything.

-Young Ant

From The Beat: We're glad to hear that you want to change your lifestyle. Coming to the halls isn't cool. And if smoking weed and hanging with your friends is gonna bring you right back here then it isn't worth it. Do whatever you need to do to get out this system; Even if it means not smoking weed and hanging around with yo' friends.

Waiting To Get Out

What's up Beat? Well just here waiting to get out tomorrow, but I still don't know where I'm going, either to my house or to a group home in Chino Hills.

I hope I go home because I feel like I did my time already because I been here five months. I think they should give me a chance to go home on E.M or home supervision or straight release because I miss my parents and I miss being with some of my potnas. Only the ones that have my back and I miss my mom's food and having fun.

-Ernesto

From The Beat: Well you did what you did, so you have to face the consequences for your actions, but that doesn't mean that you don't deserve a chance to redeem yourself. If you do get to go home please don't come back. If they give you a chance don't do anything that's going to get you in trouble because you might not get another chance. We wish you luck and remember if you get this chance do not waste it! We hope to hear from you down the road Ernesto. You're a good guy who deserves the best!

My Testimony

I am in jail, I feel, because I got kidnapped. The man that did it still has not got caught. I've really been going through it in my room 'cause I just went through this being locked up and everything. I just try to pray and take it one day at a time and be respectful to everybody even though I have a lot of pain.

I just really want to go home, I don't know what to do anymore but I have given my life to the Lord. I don't know why my PO put me back in jail, but I think it's 'cause she doesn't know.

This might not make any sense 'cause my mind is going about 50 miles per hour and I can only write so fast so bare with me. I love everybody, hugs and kisses, prayers and blessings.

-Alisha

From The Beat: It's terrible and unforgivable that you've been through such a terrible ordeal—being kidnapped and held against your will is something no one should ever have to go through. It's then doubly awful that instead of getting the therapy you need, that you are in jail. But we have faith that you will survive this. You have incredible spirit and intelligence. With support and time, you will get through this.

Returning Home

The hard part about me returning home is when I go home it will be in a different state. It will also be with my grandma that I only seen once. I won't know anyone out there and I don't know what I will do. I know I can look for a job or I can just go to school.

I have never been out to Tennessee and I don't know how it is out there, probably all music is country, but I am going to see if I can go to the Tennessee Volunteers college if I can I want to play for their basketball team.

-Beau

From The Beat: We feel you. It is going to be hard adapting to a new environment. But just be yourself and you'll be all right. You can always make new friends. Just stay out of trouble. If you really want to play basketball then don't let anything stop you from accomplishing any of your goals. Start by doing well in school!

The Hard Part About Starting New

What's up Beat? This is your homeboy Chikillo from Oakland.

Well the hard thing of returning back to my house is that I may hang out with the same people I was hanging out with. That's the hard thing of going back to my house because I made a promise to my parents and my girl.

The sooner I get out of the hall I was gonna start a new life because I ain't trying to hang out with the same people 'cause I ain't trying to come back to the hall because is not the same being locked up then being in the outs having fun.

But I'm just waiting to go to court on the 29th so I don't know what's gonna happen with my case, but I hope I get out soon because I miss my parents and my girl. So I hope I get out.

Well I hope I get out well I'm out. Alrato. this your homeboy, Chikillo.

-Chikillo

From The Beat: Well we hope that you realize what's more important when you get out. Do you want to keep coming back to the halls? Do you want to keep leading a negative lifestyle that's just going to guarantee you more time incarcerated, and taking chances with your life. If you care about yourself at all, or your girl, or your

The Hard Part About Returning Home

When I return home I have to deal with my father, mother, siblings and boyfriend all on my case. They watch my every move and everyone wants me to do so well that they irritate me. They won't allow me to use the phone in privacy or the computer.

My boyfriend won't kick it with me unless my homework is done and although I know it's because they care it doesn't feel good to have eyes on you 24-7. But until I get off my EM I'm just going to stay on a strict schedule but without so many eyes on me and without the government watching my every move.

My father is going to watch me the most because he really wants me to graduate like all my older siblings and get my life together. I want to get my life together as well and I'm grateful that I have a great support group because a lot of people don't have a support group at all. To help me get through the time I'm going to be on ankle monitor is knowing that it's not going to last forever. And talking with my family and boyfriend helps the process be less stressful.

-Elizabeth

From The Beat: You are right- you are very lucky to have a family who is willing to do what it takes to help you succeed. Will you be able to take advantage of that, or do you think your frustration at the lack of privacy will get the better of you? we hope you can use this time to really focus, and start down the path you want to be on.

My Environment

The hard part about going is returning to the environment. Another hard part is going to school, 'cause I haven't been in school in like a year and a half. Another hard part is staying out of trouble because when I'm on the outs I like to get money. And another thing is I gotta worry about my enemies. My environment is surrounded by negativity guns, drugs, hoes, crack heads, and enemies.

Why I didn't go to school for the past year in a half, 'cause I keep being on the run and coming to jail.

-Lil' J

From The Beat: Now that's rough. But just like you get brought up in this crazy mix and get caught up in this lifestyle. How do you get out? You have to get out by fighting through it all. You need to do something about it. You can't just let all the negativity suck you in and let it ruin your entire life. Don't you want to make it out the hood? Or do you want to be stuck in jail, or in a wooden box? Think about it. You can fight for your way out, or you can just sit there and let all the negativity suck yo' life away.

My Resources

Well, this happens to be my first time in juvenile hall. So I'm not sure of the resources I will have when I get out, but I know there's a few places able and willing to help.

I know I can look to my mother for help in getting me back to school and also help me to find a job and to get my license. I'm going to be able to buy my own car.

So my mother and God are my greatest resources. I can also look to my few friends for comfort and support through my time of need.

-Taco

From The Beat: It's great that you have your mother to support you—we hope you take this opportunity to really focus on school, and building your life.

The Challenges

Well some of the challenges about going back home is worrying about if you are gonna run back to the juvenile facility center. Now that I've been here for a lil' while I am now worried cause I'm not really afraid to come back. I haven't went to school for awhile so when I get out I am have to go to school. So it's going be kind of hard. And I'm used to being out really late and now I'm gonna have to be home really early. I used to do a lot of drugs now I have to get drug tested, but all of this is for my good.

-Don't Trip

From The Beat: Damn straight everything is for your own good. You need to realize the value of your freedom. You can go right back to doing the same thing you were doing so you can come right back here. It's all up to you and how you want to live your life. If you can't follow some simple tasks for just a couple months until you get off probation or however long it's gonna take then that's your decision. All of this is for your own good. If you don't go to school and get an education how are you planning on getting a decent job?

Doctor, Doctor!

I think it can help to go to the doctor if you really need to, but personally I'm pretty in touch with my body and when something's wrong with me I can generally find an herb or rest or even exercise.

Like if I have a sore throat Ill just eat some vitamins and after a couple days it's gone. If I really need to or I don't know what's wrong, but usually I can heal myself.

-Thomas

From The Beat: Even though you're pretty in touch with your body you should still go to the doctors. Cause you might never know what's actually wrong. Doctor's make a career out of studying the human body. No matter how in touch with your body you are we bet that you can't name every bone, artery or vein in your body, 'cause we can't. Therefore it's good to go to the doctors and have a professional check you out.

The Hard Part Of Life

What's up with it The Beat? I'm here today to write about the hard part of my life. The hard part of my life is you can't wait to go home, times go by slow when you think about it. I didn't return from home yet because I'm still doing my time and this is my first.

I'm worried about going home because it's going to be hard over there, and it's going' to be hard when they give me curfew.

If I decide to get out the game I will do better, treat my family better - stop yelling, coming home late, second, I'm going to stop hanging with the wrong crowd.

Well alright then Beat.

-Lil' Alex

From The Beat: Life is hard, challenging and full of obstacles. That's life though. If it throws challenges at you don't be afraid. Accept the challenge with a smile. Nobody ever said life was gonna be easy. Get out the game before something bad happens to you. What's it gonna take for you to realize that if you're in the game you will be trapped and you'll have limited options. Get out now while it's not too late. You don't want to be sitting in jail next time looking at some serious time (like your homeboy) thinking to yourself you should've got out the game.

A Healthy Life

A healthy life is something I have because I stay active and playing football and running around playing. Having sense, I don't smoke cigarettes or any of that nature.

I don't drink alcohol because I see what it do to people. It make them do dumb stuff and they get angry for nothing or little simple stuff. That's what keeps me going, that, my family, and sports. If I'm not healthy I don't play sports I won't have the wind for it.

But I think if they had a lot more activities for kids to do there would be a lot less young criminals in the world today.

-Lil' Bra

From The Beat: You do bring up a good point. Young people need more activities so they can be occupied and stay out of trouble. We're glad to hear that you're healthy by playing sports. But coming to the hall is not healthy for your lifestyle. You should consider sticking to your sports, and family so you won't be coming to jail.

Going Home

The hard part about going home is yo' PO pee testing you, especially if you smoke but you can drink though. But be coo' and stay solid get active too. And the police pulling you over and other cases getting quick money and getting Bo.

-Lil Twone

From The Beat: You have to stop drinking and smoking if it's only gonna bring you back here. There ain't nothing wrong with having fun but if you're gonna be doing things that's gonna get you locked up then you have to stop and realize what's more important, drinking and smoking or your freedom? It's your choice.

Healthy Life

A healthy life to me is when you are happy and not stressing. Y

ou are joyful when your happy and not having to worry about many things.

Another part of being healthy is not smoking cigarettes.

I also think having sex is healthy.

Exercising makes you physically healthy.

Reading makes you mentally healthy.

-Insane Viet

From The Beat: You're right all those things you mentioned are healthy. Are you healthy? And if you're not healthy what's stopping you from being healthy?

My Cory

My baby Cory is the sweetest thing ever. When I first met him, all we did was stare at each other for a very long time and then we left on to our separate ways and I never thought I would see him again and boy was I wrong.

The next day around 2:30 pm I was on my way to see my best friend. He was driving and of course I was walking which I hardly ever do.

He stopped when he saw me and got out of his car and formally introduced himself and I thought it was cute because any other dude would have hollered at me or any other girl from their car and kept going. But not Cory, Cory is sweet.

Now me and Cory haven't been together that long but I have grown to care a lot about him I don't love him yet but I will soon find out if I do or not.

-Lady Precious

From The Beat: It's wise that you are approaching the relationship with excitement but also caution. Love is a term that is thrown around a lot in our society- it's used loosely, sometimes too loosely. We hope he proves to be every bit as sweet and respectful as he appears to be.

The First and Last Time

The first time I was locked up, it was hard for me, because I had never been locked. I missed my love ones who really care about me. The first time that I was locked up was for robbery.

Now that I am getting out, I know that this my first and last time being locked up. My mom and dad come to visit me. It's not fun. It will be better to see them everyday.

-Christopher

From The Beat: Yes! We hope this is the last time you ever get locked up. If we ever see you gain, we hope it's in the Beat office only.

Doctor's Visit Not Enough

When I go to the doctor first thing I think about is after I leave the hospital I go and buy me some dro that's when I really wanna get on.

-Lil' Kwan

From The Beat: Is buying dro all you can think about? That's not healthy Kwan. If you need help you should get some. Don't be afraid to ask.

My Return

The hardest thing about returning home is gonna be all the silly rules they're gonna have for probation, plus I'm gonna get sent to boarding school because the court don't think I'll stay at home and do regular school, even though I want to try. The judge doesn't want to give me another chance.

-Thomas

From The Beat: You right probation might have a bunch of silly rules, but if you follow them long enough without getting in trouble then you will be able to get off probation. Wouldn't you rather have your freedom and follow a bunch of silly rules than being in jail locked up following a whole bunch of silly rules?

Just Waiting

What's up wit' it Beat? As for me just posted up waiting on a miracle. I'm trying not to stress. I been thinking about bettering my future. I ain't really got nothing to say like always so get at me.

-Lil' Ace

From The Beat: We hope you think more about bettering your future. That's the way you should be thinking. Do you actually like being locked up? Don't you want to have your freedom back and do something with your life?

Doctors and Health

Let me start by saying I don't like the doctors. I only go because I want to live long and be healthy. Returning home for me should never be hard. Depending on what kind of family you came from, plus if you really want to you can get back on track.

Mental health? Mentally I'm coo'. The question is, are you?

I was living a healthy life. In juvie I'm not because in order to be healthy you should be happy. I'm not. Other then that I'm coo'. I'm healthy physically. Emotionally? Maybe a little off. Just a little bit. But I'm alive, I'm blessed. And like I always say "I know I can make it. Doubt me if you want."

-Juicii

From The Beat: What a great motto. You sound like you're on the right path—what are the challenges you face? You say you are alright mentally— how has been in jail impacted your mental and emotional health?

The Hard Part About Returning Home....

What's hard about going back is that I got a deal wit punk ass ninjas that keep draining me everyday. Ninjas calling me phony nagging like a female but I'm gonna hold my head up.

-Tbang

From The Beat: Hold yo' head up and quit tripping off these haters. Go about yo' own business and ignore 'em. You can't be sweating off all these haters man. Tripping of them is just gonna sidetrack you for whatever goals you have.

I Need To Go Home

I hate jail and my granny and God said hate no one. I hate jail! I hate this place more than anything and I want to go home asap. This place would be worse than hell but I'm not on fire. All I have to say is I need to get out of here.

-Rayna

From The Beat: Jail was created for you to hate it. So if you can convert your "hatred" into a determination NOT to ever come back, than maybe it's a good thing! What do you think?

Returning Home

If I had a chance to return home I don't really know what to do. I would probably stay home and be with my family. But the hard part would be to adapt to what would be new in the family or on the street.

-Desmond

From The Beat: We hope that you adapt quickly and we're sure having your family by your side would make you feel more comfortable. It's a challenge but it's nothing you can't handle.

The Temptations

To me the hard part about returning home is going to be all the temptations. Oh yeah, and definitely trying to not screw up plus violate my probation, 'cause I don't want to come back 'cause I already wasted Christmas, New Year's, plus missed my grandpa's wedding. I have to take my finals or that stupid exit exam. plus I'm already behind on hecka stuff! man, that sucks. but I just can't wait to be home with my family.

-Anthony

From The Beat: Well you have to make a choice. You can choose to follow your probation, fight off all the temptations and not come back. Or you can fall into temptation and come right back here. It's your choice. You already missed enough holidays it's your choice whether you want to be locked up for the next Christmas too!

Returning Home

Every time I get locked up, I get hella mad, because in the back of my mind I think if only I would've run a little bit faster, or if I would have went left instead of right....

The very few seconds that would of changed my fate. I wouldn't have seen that cop or I would have been over the fence. The few seconds would have mattered and then I wouldn't have been locked up and I never know what I couldn't of been doing.

But going home is always hard 'cause things change and I feel left out and aren't comfortable.

-Unknown

From The Beat: Maybe that's the hardest part, right, the way the free world moves on while people are locked up. But don't you think maybe the mistakes leading you to lockdown start way before that chase, or that moment when you make the left turn? Tell us this, what's the ORIGINAL mistake, the one that starts you down the path to where you find yourself in trouble?

One Worry

Ain't shhh hard about returning home. I'm gonna be the same me on the block running thangs. My only worries 'bout going home is getting shot.

-Insane Viet

From The Beat: Man that's something to worry about man. You're not afraid of dying? Why would you go back to a block that might bring you back to jail, or could possibly take your life? Keep it real!

Returning Home Is Always Hard.

It's hard 'cause once you get out you do not know where to turn to. Most of the time when people come home they go right back into their old days. I think when people get out of jail that the government should have programs so that us youth can get into.

They need programs so that when we go home we won't feel that we have to go back to the streets for help. When there really should be programs to help us get jobs and things of that nature so that we can see a new way out instead of returning to the streets.

-Big Stewy

From The Beat: You make some good points here - but also, did you know that there ARE several programs in Oakland that can help you do exactly what you're talking about? The Mentoring Center, The Omega Boys Club, Youth Uprising, the Mayor's youth program, IEP, and a bunch of other programs are all out there, waiting to welcome you with open arms. You in? Ask your PO for help or The Beat!

The Hardest Part? The Police

The hardest part about returning home is when you already have a record and the police knows you are just some cops. Now since it's a lot of rookies coming out and patrolling, the veterans are now working Task Force in Richmond or just from Berkley to Oakland. They want to say hello to you and smile in your face and bounce out to check you to see what's on you.

They know what you went in for and haven't seen you for a long time so they are going to ask "Where you been, long time no see?" "What, you got any drugs, sharp objects, guns?"

So that's the only reason I hate coming back home, or all I say to them is "man what the hell you looking at?" Or, "Man you already know I'm Charlie." So I don't like the police from when you left to when you come back.

-Doe

From The Beat: Good point, it's like even if you've decided to try to change, the police are looking to see if you're going to do more criminality. It makes it harder to be positive when your past has people looking at you another way. Are there any police that you feel are actually hoping you do well? Any that you feel have more to offer than just harassment?

I'm So Numb

Sittin' in this room gives people in here (juvenile hall) a lotta thinking time.

I've been in here three months and two weeks plus a couple days ...so all that time I've been allowed one thang: quiet thinking time. I've thought about everything from why and what I've done, all the way to families ...It's like I've been lied to and put off like I was a broken record, so after my big brotha died I let my feelings do tha' same.

My insides just froze over so it's like I can't cry or care about nothing...I've tried to change but I've been like this for so long. I mean, don't get me wrong ...I'm still a cool ass cat. I just don't have any feelings, 'cause I could care less about what happen to a lotta people, including myself.

Unless you saw me wit' my squad which are my brothers or my lil' baby 'cause she then showed tha' kid that it a lot solid females out there in tha' world so I keep it what my name is... solid!! I know what I'm talking 'bout 'cause growin' up in tha streets showed me you can't play tha' game 'cause tha' game gon' play you but it's not all about that and one day I hope to prove and stand by that until then.

-Lil' Solid

From The Beat: The thing that's funny about your writing is that you write a lot about feeling numb, but then on the other hand, we've seen so many powerful emotions in your writing (and in person). We've seen humor, we've seen smiles that came from way down deep, we've seen you sad, we've seen you angry, and we've also seen you proud. It's true that the life you're in can make it hard for a person to feel, especially when there are so many so-called painkillers (those 5 P's you wrote about) to make a person numb. But we have faith in you that your heart is to big to freeze, so long as you really work on trying to make a difference in your life and make it better!

It's Fullest Potential

When I go home every weekend, I see the things I am missing by being locked up at camp. Chilling with my family and my girl helps me get through the program and it gives me something to look forward to.

When I get out I am going to make some lifestyle changes so I don't end up locked up again. I'm going to get my diploma while I'm here so when I get out I can go straight to college.

I am also going to get a job and stop grinding. I am going to start living my life to its fullest potential, because being locked up ain't where it's at!

-Young B

From The Beat: It sounds like you have real loved ones sticking with you to make things better.

The Code

What's up Beat this is Mike.

Chillin' in max unit. Just to let it be known. Don't stick to what everybody call "the code". Don't do no time for nobody... just tell the truth. Keep it real with the District Attorney. Yo' homies don't got yo' back.

In reality it's all men for themselves. It's a dog eat world. Your real friend is the District Attorney and your public defender.

I was looking at five years, and now I'm going to a group home. I hope the Beat keep my name on this piece because I'm out the game for good. I promise!

-Mike

From The Beat: We have to agree that for the most part, you're not "snitching" or betraying anyone if you just tell the truth. Lying or trying to put the blame on another person, now that's messed up. But for the most part, it just makes no sense to think that lying can be good for anyone, especially if it means doing time for another person's crime.

The Left Side of Your Chest

Put yo' hand on the left side of yo' chest
 yo' heart pumpin' inside of it's bumpin'
 I'm kind of far away but soon enough home to you
 Is where I'm comin'
 And ain't no frontin' you know it's me in yo' heart. 'Cause that's where I'm at
 I put my team on the map
 Stayed outside pullin' in stacks
 But I need to be at home caked up wit' you instead
 I was actin' a fool and I knew it wasn't all that cool
 But I'm still wit' you baby boo
 'Cause that's where I'm at pick you up for schoo'
 Just to walk you to every class
 But hella other females want the Prince they could kiss
 the grass
 'Cause I got you and I go crazy when you say I love you
 So I know you my boo.
 'Cause that's where I'm at fools all in your ear
 Talking a bunch of nonsense that you don't wanna hear
 Bumpin' they gums saying yo' boyfriend be on one
 But it's all hate 'cause they want they name on my plate
 But it's me and you face to face always so wit' you is
 where I'm gon' stay
 'Cause that's where it's at everybody know that it's me
 and you but they still test
 Pretty soon I'ma put all that hatin' to rest
 I can't wait to see you sleepin' on my chest makin' me
 smile
 'Cause I can best 'cause wit' you Mami is were it's at.

-Lil' Solid

From The Beat: We hope this poem reaches your girls' heart - and even more important, we hope that once you win her, you keep her. Less worries about 'putting your team on the map' and more about putting yourself in a good position where you can see your talents grow! Our best wishes for you and your girl, and also for you and yourself. ...

Now At Camp

Hey what's good Beat, it's me Bones, now at camp. Don't worry I ain't gon' run.

I'm gonna pimp my program so I can get back in the outs and do what I do, but this time with out me selling pills I'm gonna get a job and get straight go to the family and the homies and go post up my block.

-Bones

From The Beat: Tell us more about your plans for getting out. What kind of job are you going to get? What will it be like being in your family? Will you be able to stay safe "posted on your block?"

Wrong Decisions

I feel that I have a very healthy life and that I have a chance to make it even better.

But what got me in here would be the fact that this life has a number of decisions I choose. I think that I am a healthy person but I just make decisions which hurt me.

But each time I make unhealthy decisions I know to make the right decision when the choice come up. Life is full of healthy and unhealthy decisions, but we learn and soon make right decisions being accused of robbery has earned me enough time to notice I've made a wrong decision.

The few weeks in here turns you so much and gives you time to reflect and learn from your mistakes.

-Dillon

From The Beat: What are some of the new "healthy" decisions that you expect to make when you get out? Or even while you're locked up? Can you give us some examples?

What Hard Part?

You ask what's the hard part of going home?

Well to be real, there is no bad part. I want to go back with my family and female. I can't wait to kick it with the homeboys. Yeah the only bad part would be that while I'm on the outs, I'll run that risk of catching another case.

But to all of you in the game you know how it is. You don't want to step 'cause the game is all we know...you know how it's gonna be in this life. We keep on going until we get caught cause we all get away at least once.

Thinking that we can live a good life, and doing bad things 'cause in this life we know what we're doing to others. Thinking that it'll never happen to us. But guess what karmas a bummer so to everybody that's up in the hall or some placement. Keep your heads up. 'Cause you had the courage to do the crime but you don't want to do the time on how.

-Boxer

From The Beat: There's some real thinking in this piece... especially what you say about Karma. And there's another expression about karma, that actually comes from Christianity, which says that "the criminal is punished by his crime," meaning that when you do wrong to others, you hurt inside for regrets of the pain you cause. It might be buried deep, but it comes back as nightmares or stress or other kinds of bad feelings. Do you think that is true? Has that ever happened to you?

Trouble Always Seems To Find

The hardest part about returning home from jail is all of the peer pressure and other heavy obstacles you're going to have to go through.

That is the most hardest part about returning home from jail, mainly because you've been waiting to get home to do right then trouble always seems to find you no matter how good you plan to do.

My advice is to say, screw it, and do what you know is right. And always put God first.

-Carl

From The Beat: Well, now that you hooked up with the Mentoring Center, do you think you'll find more peers who are trying to do the right thing, people who can provide positive peer pressure that will help you when you're trying to overcome these obstacles?

Mind, Body, Soul

Last time I went to a doctor was the 26th of December, 2007. My pinky was broken and I had a cast on, or it was called a split. But they said that it was even a broken pinky it was just a boxer fracture.

So that meant that I had to do LA Meet, which was n exercise program. I didn't really want to do it because they were crazy exercise and hard. That was when I was at JJC.

But now I'm at camp and barely even do any exercise here, but with the pinky messed up and now it has recovered.

But in a couple of weeks I will be healthier and do exercise so I can be healthy, body, mind, and soul.

My body and soul was unhappy because I need to be fit. With exercise you will complete one of the three steps to being fully healthy. When I was locked up my soul was out of my body so the second step was to complete all the stages to be myself and be healthy. So one day I will beat all the thing that are pushing me down. They Diego will go!

-Go Diego Go

From The Beat: It's true, or as one friend once told us "your body is where you live. If you mess up your body, you've got nowhere to live!" Do you think camp is going to help you get what you need to beat what's pushing you down, or is it holding you back?

A Healthy Life

During my past experience, I been doing some drugs that take away the stress. The first time I smoked weed was with my brother. We had smoked a quarter. I was gone off my mind. Then my brother and patnas started playing mind games with me.

It was all good though. But when I started smoking weed for a couple of months, I started breaking out. But I still smoke. Then I started popping pills (ecstasy) and I was on like shhh! Ecstasy was the best feeling for me. I be popping like 5 pills at a time to make me on because after a while 1 pill or 2 pills wasn't getting me on, so I started popping more. Then I remember my potna came through with some powder. I snorted the first line the taste was nasty as hell to no I just feel that I was losing a lot of brain cells, it did make me dumber doing drug, also I was add slow but now I'm tryna live healthy and get out of camp.

-Lil' Linh

From The Beat: So straight up - do you think that when you get out you'll go back to doing drugs? They'll definitely still be there, and the stresses might still be there too, so you'll have real temptation on your hands. What are the things you would stress the most about?



What I'm Used to Doing

The hard part about returning home is going home and doing the right thing, because when I go home on a home pass. For getting out of camp is to me to do the right thing and not mess up, and come back to the hall.

The hardest part about coming home is changing up, not always hanging around the same people and houses or smoking weed.

That will be hard to do when you home because that is what I am used to doing. So that what I think that will be the hardest thing.

-Jh

From The Beat: Are there other things that you really like doing, that you used to do before you started smoking weed all the time? Because maybe if you get back into other things you like - music, sports, art, a cool job - then it'll be like you have new (good) habits to help fight the old (bad) ones!

Last Of A Dying Breed

I've been restricted for two weeks. I go home this weekend. I'm tired of being around all of these J-Cats. I miss my real homies that I won't see in a long time.

I couldn't go home for two weeks because when I came back on my HP I couldn't pee so they gave me a dirty because they thought I was dirty.

-Lil' Mang

From The Beat: What's it like when you do go home? Are there a lot of old temptations? Family drama? Or does it feel good? Next time you hit the paper, tell us about a weekend at home!

My Life is A Merry-Go-Round

My life is merry-go-round. It goes in circles and has different people in and out of my life. It's funny because when you do something at a certain age with someone, a few years later it happens again.

I'm used to living in a household full of people in a 2 bedroom. I didn't like coming in the house early, to many people so I stay outside.

Since I'm outside I might as well make money and stay getting high to ease the words in my head telling me to do that. I want to do whatever I please, and whatever I see. I look back at it how when I lay my head down every night thinking of my potnas and cousins who are running from bullets. At first we was playing block tag, stealing from the stores, and trying to get booty. I got to make it short because this is bootsy-ass unit 4. But my life is going in all directions.

One day I will find my way somewhere, wherever it takes me, and I don't like having to look over my shoulder and cars sliding through it ain't cool, having a gun, having to run, from the enemy ain't fun.

-Doe

From The Beat: We'll have this image of the Merry-Go-Round in our heads for a while.... It's like a Merry-Go-Round in a horror movie, right? Where you go around an around in circles, and no matter how hard you try you can't get off. It makes us wonder, if you had someplace to go besides home that wasn't filled with all the craziness of street life, would that help? A rec center, a recording studio, a night class, because it's a war out there, as you know, but that doesn't mean you need to be one of the casualties.

Get Healthy

When I look at my life I see too much on me.

I used to smoke a lot, that gets me lazy. I don't want to do work, that will be my first thing to do: Get up, get high, take my female to work everyday. She used to get mad at me, but she know I can't help it. But Friday I popped pills a few time at a party, and smoked hella much, did hella things.

I did drugs since I was about 12 years old. But I never used to smoke cigarettes, trust me thing that's a thing that I don't like. I hate that.

So my girl always tells me "you could stop doing drug baby, and get healthy." And do something wit' your life, so one day I start thinking about it. Yes she's right, nothing ain't gon' change when I keep doing what I'm doing.

I need to stop to get healthy. So how's it been a year that I stop doing all the stuff what I was doing. It feels so good, like I'm healthy but 6 months ain't long to get healthy but I feel it though.

-Phan

From The Beat: A body and mind can do a lot of recovering in six months. What are some of the things that the "healthy" you is different from the messed up drugged out you? Have you seen your girlfriend? What kinds of thoughts cross your mind?

Who Am I?

I am another juvenile in the system that is just a statistic.

Just another face in this place, another person held back in life by the BS that I got pinned down with. I been given plenty of chances and messed up. But when I finally go through with it then some thing happens that ain't my fault.

But nobody cares and that's all that matters that I've been labeled and just because the way I used to live my life now I am stuck with that label I got. Even though in my heart I wanna change and try to, the people I kick it with get in trouble and I end up getting caught up on some stupid shhh that I ain't got nothin' to do with.

I ain't no snitch, but I turn my back and my copartner is snitchin'.

My mom be sayin' "Told you bout that mother..., and look at you now! How you gonna get out this one, 'cause I'm tired of spending money on you."

-Ryan

From The Beat: Maybe it's time for you to find new people to kick it with? We know it's hard to turn your back on friends, but your life, future, and freedom are a lot more important, and like you said, you keep getting caught up because of who you hang out with.



Statistics

Statistics say a lot about people today.

Like 75% of urban population have or will be uncared for.

They say that 85% percent of people that live in urban settings will never step foot in an university.

Only 45% of teens will graduate high school in 2009.

They say 35% of all teens in public high schools will die by the end of this year. Well I say that's bullshhh, because we can all rise above the statistics and make them stay less and less every year.

Like my grandfather always told me, with rain the sun and the clouds always follow.

My quote is: "There will be a new morning... every time you wake up, it's sometimes cloudy, sometimes rainy, but always there will be sunshine."

-Lil' Momo

From The Beat: That's right Momo, whatever happens, you still have it in you to say that no matter what, you will never be a statistic!

Bangin'

The hard part about returning home is that I'm gonna have to start out at square one. I gotta get a new phone, a new car, a new everything. But like everyone says change is a good thing, and I believe that I was sent here for some reason. How do I no that if I stood on the block I wouldn't have got killed?

It's just chances you take everyday but I take um. But when I got out I ain't gon' stop bangin', but I'm 'bout to get a job and better myself as a human being, like I should of a long time ago.

You don't got to stop banging to accomplish your goals, you just gotta work a little harder to what you want to do, and I'm gone do it

-Dough Boy

From the Beat: It makes us really happy to hear that you have plans to better yourself. Your family must be proud. But you know, The Beat is more than 12 years old now and of all the young men and women who wrote in our pages, the ones who DID finally get a chance to accomplish their goals, stay alive and stay out of the system, were the ones who stopped banging. It's like if you let yourself get pulled in two opposite directions, eventually you have to choose one or get split right down the middle. Which one are you going to choose? Because we promise you: You can't have both.

Ain't Trippin'

Was up with it Beat! This is Lil' Copy from Oakland. Well I'm just up here back in camp thuggin' it out.

I'm out in early May. So I'll be back in the town with my hood family. I messed up by running my first time. I had two more months, but I was stressing so I ran and I messed up. But I ain't tripping its all good.

I got three more months to go and I'm going to be back out there in the street doing my thang thang with my homies well I'm out.

-Lil' Copy

From The Beat: We're just glad you came back before getting hurt by the kind of drama that seems to hit people most when they're still on the run. What were you stressing about? Did you go to your homies or your family? When you get your next home visits, will there be stress waiting for you, or are things there pretty peaceful?

Baby Mama Drama

My ninjas was right about baby mama drama.

I thought that it would never happen to me but it did. Between me and my baby mama, I thought we were going to have a family together but now it's all messed up. The way I feel is like fahget that girl. I really miss my daughter Lashia. She will be one year old in March.

I wish I could see my daughter ...it's been 6 months now. I really miss her but it's all my baby mama fault. She ain't messin' with me no more, because I been locked up too much and she thinks I'm a bad example to my daughter. Hopefully when my daughter gets older she will understand why daddy ain't there.

Oh yeah and my baby mama don't like what I'm doing in the streets. She don't like the way I get money and the way I eat, but its all good though. I get pearl more from others. She ain't the only one. I mean females are like money ...they comes and goes. Well I'm out. I'll get back at y'all until next week.

-Lil' Rondale

From The Beat: You can't speak that way on females anymore, not now that you have a little girl who is going to take her cues on what she deserves from how you are! As for your baby mama, we don't know the details, but it's true that your life on the streets is not the life a father should live, or the life your daughter should be exposed to. You have rights as a father, and you need to fight for the right to keep your little girl in your life. But you also need to fight to make your life safe, clean, and secure enough to make room for the presence of the innocent little soul you've brought into the world. Can you do that?

Doctor, Doctor

What's up wit' the beat? This ya boy Mike writing out of the unit 6. The last time I went to the doctor is when them ninjas tried to take me off the map. They tried to kill yo' boy but they failed.

When I went to the doctor, they tried to give me hella medicine to take the pain away. I wasn't really tryin' to be there 'cause I was on the run, so I was telling them I didn't want it. They put a I.V. in my arm and took hella x-rays. The doctors told me to not be active for a while, but I didn't take their advice. It's good though 'cause ya boy still here, still doing his thang. Words getting short, I'm out.

-Mike The Beast

From The Beat: Yes, you're still here, and we're glad of that. But if you're still doing your "thang" even after this sign from God to hang it up, then who knows how long you'll be here? The absolute truth is this: far, far too many boys your age can never write what you've written, because they didn't make it. Just how many chances do you think you get?



Healthy Life

Healthy life... Man, my life ain't nowhere close to healthy — not hygiene-wise, but the way I do shhh, you know. Like running with the gun is a deadly disease because eventually you go get caught wit' that. But yeah, I need to work on being healthy. It's hard and I can't say I'm go try.

-Fed-Up

From The Beat: We had to take a few lines out of this piece about the kind of gun you are talking about. But beyond that, can you explain to us how you can identify your practice as "a deadly disease," but then conclude that you may not even try to "find a cure." Do you respect your life so little?

What's Hard About Returning Home

The hard part about going home is when you have to go back to the same situation you came from, when you gotta hit that block and grind for your kids. I have a son, but he died of heart failure. But at that time, I was out there grinding to get a meal for him. That's all I was concerned about, my lil' ninja. That's the hardest part about coming back home.

This ya boy Don keepin' it real.

-Lil' Don

From The Beat: We're sorry about your son, Don. That's rough. But if he had lived, and you ended up here because of that grind, then who would be putting food on the table for him? Sometimes you have to think past step one...

Facing Folks At Home Is Hard

What's good, yo! Been coo'...

But yeah, the hard part 'bout returnin' home is gettin' situated at home and how to face the folks. Plus, I would be speechless going back to the spot, like I'm speechless when my folks come visit me...

But to put a long "Beat" short, it's gonna be hard to go home, but, at tha same time I'm gonna be lovin' it...

A'ight then Beat...

-Ulala

From The Beat: We would like it better if you turned this short piece into long, rather than the other way around... Why are you speechless when your folks visit? What would you like to talk to them about that you find it difficult to do? Are you planning to make any changes in how you live your life when you get out of here? Won't those changes be difficult? You could have written so much more...

I Stay High

Man, I love when the doctor tells me that I'm healthy, but I hate when he tell me that weed is bad for me, 'cause I love weed and I think that weed helps me focus a lot. I always do stuff high. I go to school high; I drive high; I fight high; do my work high. Man, I do all my little BS stuff high. I even play football high. I stay high when I was on the outs. I came to court high too. That's just me.

-V-Guttah

From The Beats: Didn't you leave out one of the activities that is connected to staying high? We're talking about coming to the hall... Of course, you can choose to ignore your doctor, but that doesn't make him wrong. We've seen people smoking cigarettes while attached to oxygen machines still arguing that smoking isn't bad for them. They'll die believing that...

Fight For Our Lives

Why do we hate one another
Then go to be fake to another
You tell yo' lies to yo' mother
But keep it real with a runner

I done been to shady places were it rains in the summer

I done been through hell and back

But dawg, I'll die for my people

Try to keep it equal

Spread yo' wings and fly like an eagle

I was taught to think it out before I speak out my mind

But now I put ma word together and I speak it through a rhyme

As ma pencil meet the paper you can take it or leave it

Our last breath is all the same, although you hate to believe it

-Mercedes

From The Beat: Yes, our last breath is all the same, but the breaths we take before that last one are all different, and in those differences can be found success or failure — freedom or slavery! We don't think your people want you to die for them; they want you to live for them, and for yourself. That's what we hope you put your mind to doing. And it can't be done if you allow yourself to be locked in a cage.

On The Run

The hard part returning home is when people say a lot of bad shhh about juvenile and shhh. I got here Sunday because of something I did outside. That's all and stuff. And I was on the run for two days.

-Gary

From The Beat: This is hardly worth publishing in The Beat. It tells us almost nothing of value. For example, have you learned anything about what it means to be free (and what it means to be the slave you've allowed yourself to be)? Have you thought about any changes that you should bring into your life? Like what? Next time, we want MUCH more than this!

The Hard Part About Returning Home

For reals, though, ain't no hard part about going home. I can't wait to get up out of here. One year at the Ranch ain't nothin', but without no females makes the time go by slower.

I got, like, four months left. My time's right around the corner and when it comes, I think I'm 'bout to be the happiest ninja in the world, 'cause I finally get to be with some females (ha) feel me? Being up in here, I've seen a lot of people get out and some of them start messing up, like be tryin' to catch time like they scared to go home or somethin'. Me, I'm 'bout to be on my tucked shhh by myself when I got two months left, 'cause I ain't gon' let nobody get in the ways of me gettin' some. Much love.

-Young Menace

From The Beat: Some men locked up do get shaky about being set free and mess up, because they don't know what to expect of the world when they get out, and they're frightened, you're right. It's great that you're eager to go home and meet some ladies, but why do you disrespect them by referring to them merely by their sexuality? They're all whole people, with personalities, needs, problems, with a whole lot of beauty and fun. Why would you want to miss out on all the joy a young lady can be?

I'm Back

I'm back. Man it's Lil' Junk back in this place. But you know I'm gonna be back on the block in a few. But yeah this punk-ass judge on some other shhh talking about sending a ninja to the Mills. But I ain't going nowhere. They can't hold a ninja forever.

-Lil' Junk

From The Beat: Yeah, we can see that you "ain't going nowhere." That's too bad, because as long as you think that this is the place to be (and it's clear that you do since you put yourself back in here), you won't be going anywhere. You can cuss out the judge all you want, but keep it real: he controls your life right now, and not the other way around. As for your belief that they can't hold you forever, tell it to the more than 200 children in this state now serving Life In Prison Without the Possibility of Parole (LWOP), and the more than 2,000 children doing life without parole across the country. They will never again see the light of day.

It's Not Hard To Go Home

It's not hard for me to go home. For me it's easy to go home. I love my house and my family. While I'm in here, I'm missing my lil' brother's birthday, and it's really killing me. I really miss him.

Also, my wife's birthday is on the 17th of February, and I hope I get out before that. I also missed my great grandma's birthday on the 17th of January, and she passed on Christmas 2004. Usually I would go to her grave and talk to her, but this time I couldn't because I got locked up. I just really wanna get out and be with my family.

-Ez

From The Beat: Of course you want to get out of here and be with your family. The question we have — since you certainly will get out of here — is how long will you be able to stay at that home you love so much? Your lil' brother needs you. Don't disappoint yourself. Find a way to stop doing the things that lead you here!

Too Long

What's good? This yo' boy Lil Leke comin' out of my unit. It feels like I been in here for six months, but I been down for 48 days. This shhh is weak, my ninja, feel me.

I'm out. See you later. I miss my family and my girl. I need to smoke some right now.

-Lil' Leke

From The Beat: 48 days is a long time to be locked up, but it's only a minute compared to the time the system has for you if you can't find a way to stop doing the things that brought you here. If this "shhh is weak," then don't be even weaker by giving the system power over life.

My Last Hospital Visit

What's good wit' The Beat? This that ninja Na-Na holdin' it down in the unit...

But yeah, my last time going to tha hospital was when ma ninja Wagga got knocked off in 2005. It was a ugly scene. They did that ninja shady...

Ah went to da hospital to go see the body, and bra wasn't lookin' too good. His whole head was messed up. Tha hospital gave him some shhh he was allergic to, and his body got all messed up and he died. When he died, tha doctors tried to put his body parts back together, but they messed that up too,

So, that was the last time I saw a doctor.

-Na-Na

From The Beat: What a miserable experience! Was it the hospital that allowed Wagga to die? What led him to go to the hospital in the first place? Was he shot? Does this experience make you afraid to go to hospitals now?

Schizophrenic Mindset

Out of my mind

Out on the grind

Ain't afraid to walk the line

Fear no man

Thinkin' clearly

But it's all a haze

Don't remember none of those days

Or nights, no more

It's all blood and gore

Out all day

My body's so sore

Or at least, I think so

Want a free \$200

But I never pass "Go"

Just go to jail

Get out

And go half way around the board

And back to jail

I go

Can't pay my way out

Every day I lose my mind

If it ain't all gone yet

My mind's like cheese

The one with all the holes

I walk tall and breathe

But I'm halfway dead at least

That's what the doctor said

My mental state of mind

It's unstable

My mind plays games with itself

And nothing can help

Put me back on the streets

What an improbable feat

And tomorrow I'll be back on the streets

I walk around like I'm lost

But don't try and help

My mind won't tolerate it

Not too far

Just slumped to the floor

Oh, well, problem solved

Or I think so

-Birdman

From The Beat: What's really going on in your head, causing all your confusion? Why do you describe your mind like it's Swiss cheese? Why does your doctor describe you as being half dead? You have a hugely imaginative mind, as the poetry you write shows, but it seems like you don't direct your mind past attacking your rivals, and if you follow those compulsions, nothing but disaster and tragedy will result. Does anything in the outside world, beyond your crew, your block, interest you? There's a whole world out there for you to explore.

Talking About God

Smokey: I'm an atheist.

The Beat Within: Did you ever believe in God?

S: Once upon a time, when I was young and naïve—that's when I believed in Satan, the Easter Bunny, Santa Clause, the Tooth Fairy.

When I got older—I read the Bible and I really figured out it was hella bs. I read about Moses splitting the Red Sea. I tried it, but I couldn't do it. I tried to build an ark, like Noah did, but it fell apart. I got two deers, raccoons, wild turkeys, some dogs, mountain lions from up here (Log Cabin Ranch) in my ark, but the ark fell apart and the animals ran away and the red-tailed hawks flew away. I tried to talk to God, but he was ignoring me. I tried to text him, but I got no response. I called him (on the phone) but it went to his voice mail. I left a message and asked him to help me on my math test, but he didn't call back. TBW: So do you believe in the devil any more than you do God now?

S: The devil's a sucka. He doesn't exist, either. I tried to sell him my soul, but he was broke, so I robbed him, but he only had \$1.50, but that's cool, though, because all I needed was \$1.50 to take the bus back home.

TBW: How old were you when you figured out there was no God?

S: A young teen

TBW: So what happened that caused you to realize there was no God?

S: Everything. The stories I read in the Bible were all fake, phony, were all gibberish.

TBW: So you don't go to God when you're in trouble, lonely, confused, grateful because something fabulous happened to you?

S: No. I go to my mom. God didn't bring me into this life, my mom did. She gives me good, better advice. My mom doesn't believe in God, either. God's a sucka. We gotta rap this up.

-Smokey

From The Beat: It can be devastating to a youngster when s/he no longer believes in God, but, from what you've written, you're okay with it, so tell us, what gives you hope?

Stay Out Of Here

What's good? Dis yo' boy Mook. Yeah, I been down for a min. I'm trying to get up out this thing. I got a baby comin' dis March, ya dig. I'm 'bout to go to ROP for seven months.

Ninjas need to stay up out here. I'm in here, but we'll be back soon high like the moon. My word's getting short Beat, I'm out.

-Mook

From The Beat: We hope you gain some skills in ROP that will help you stay out of places like this. Now that you are bringing a new life into the world, it's time to make some sacrifices. After all, he (or she) didn't ask to be born, so you have a major responsibility to put your child ahead of yourself. Good luck.

Making Better Choices

I think my life is healthy at times when I want it to, but it's all up to me. If I don't make the right choices, feel me, my life ain't go be healthy. That's why you gotta think before you act. I'm go start making better decisions with ma life when I get out an' keep my enemies closer, ya dig.

-D-Swoop

From The Beat: You could have made this a much better piece (maybe even a Piece Of the Week) by giving us examples and details. For example, what are those "better decisions" you need to make, and what's your plan for making them?

Time Lost

The hard part about returning home is me being gone for so long. That time I was gone is time I could never get back with my family, friends and girlfriend. So that is very hard to do a lot of catching up. This is very hard for me to say when I lose someone close to me. Me being in here is time that I should be with them enjoying life.

-Cam

From The Beats: You're right, Cam. You should be at home with your family. It's not only hard on you being away from them, it's also hard on them. Time is the same for all of us. We use it or we lose it... Since none of us can regain time lost, the only valuable thing to do is to focus on how you're going to make your time productive and useful from this point forward.

Staying Out

What's good with The Beat? I just want to write about getting out and staying out, and just staying away from people that will get me in trouble. I want to get on the right track so I don't never come back to this hole.

Something I'm go change is the things I was doing out there on them streets, 'cause my mom always say, "What goes around comes around."

-Acie

From The Beat: Your mom has lived longer than you and she has learned a few things from experience. We think you're right to listen to what she has to say. It's time to start building that positive karma so that what comes around next time is better than what came around last time...

If They're So Smart...

You really want to know how much I care, and what mental health means to me? Why should I care about what all the people in the world don't have no interest in at all? I'm not about to care about that, 'cause if they really did care, why is the white man's companies still pollute, and building all these cars that still has to use gas?

They say the black man this and the Mexican man that, but if you're so smart, why do you have to have so much money to own a electric car if they have no many? They gone wait tell the world ends. That like them, wasting all that money on the war, fighting for oil when all they got to do is build electric cars.

-T-House

From The Beat: Until all of us start caring about all of us, then of course people will keep doing the things that make themselves richer, even if it means polluting the world (or polluting their own personal communities). That's why it's important to see your connection to everyone, and not just your own. We completely agree with your analysis that human selfishness will lead to the end of the world unless something changes, but we don't agree that it's a black or brown vs. white issue. After all, the US Secretary of State is one of the loudest cheerleaders for that war you hate, and she's African-American (Dr. Condoleezza Rice). No, even though racism is still alive and well in this country, it is not the reason we are destroying ourselves. We ALL contribute to that outcome, and we ALL have a responsibility to make changes for the good of us ALL.

Until They Come Get Me

What's poppin' wit' the Beat, dawg? Y'all know who this young ninja is, Iggus, ya heard me. Yeah, this system still tryna wash me, ya dig. But I'ma keep my head above da water, dough. They can't drown me.

I'm tryna sit still till my PO come get me for da grouper, and then I'm gonna shake on his ass. I might just knock it out, dough. It ain't no tellin' when it comes down da day they come get me.

-Iggus

From The Beat: Well, between shakin' "on his ass or "knockin' it out," we know which choice leads where. And you should, too. Now's the time to test out the responsible and adult approach to your "problem" and see where it leads.

They Don't Want A Bad Boy

It's my first time in jail. When I go home, I worry about my uncle or aunt. They hate jailer. They don't like gangster. They know I'm a gangster in Chinatown. They know I beat up people. They know I smoke and drink beer. They don't want a bad boy live in their house.

My mom and dad don't let me go out with my friend. They check my bag every day. I miss my girl very much. She was cry about that. She doesn't want me to be a bad boy. She tries to make me go to school every day to make me be a good boy. I'll be a person she want me to be. I'll do the things she want me to do.

When I return home I try to be part of my family. Do the thing they like, make them happy.

-Kelvin

From The Beat: Here's your choice, the way we see it. On one side are your boys, your beer, your smoke, your gangster life and jail! On the other side are your uncle and aunt, your mom and dad, and the girl you have made cry by your choices. How could you choose your boys and jail over your girl and freedom? It seems very clear to us. Are we missing something?



Money Rap

The money is sweet
I get mines
We after everything
Nickels and dimes
Sittin' down for some time,
But that ain't gon stop me
I'ma keep stackin' chips
'Til they pop me
Ninjas can't top me
So therefore
I ain't never gone stop
On the block
Wit a pocket full of gaup, (gwop)
Hustle like Cassidy
I hustle with strategy

-Caddy

From The Beat: Does your strategy include coming to jail/Cause that's where you're headed, without fail/Stackin' your chips? Don't make us laugh/You're stackin' chips, all right, into the pockets of staff/Playin' with guns will never put you on top/It just makes you a target, like saying, "Come get me, Cop!"/So here you sit, like a caged dog/Seeing the future as if through a fog/Yes, money is sweet, but freedom is sweeter/It comes through your mind... not out of a heater!

A Healthy Life

I sought a high more pure, but I settled for the cush
I grasp a memory at a time like reading hella books
I'm trying to play my part... it's not as easy as it looks
But sloth has come to claim my fame

-Purple Hayze

From The Beat: Sloth is the enemy of progress and achievement. Don't let getting high substitute for the high you will get when you reach your goals. Keeping reading "hella books" because all the knowledge of the world is located within them.

Can't Be Here No Mo'

The hard part bout' goin' home is knowin' I'm back on da block doin' what I do best — smoke weed, cigarettes (Newports), and some more weed! All of my carnals and homies gonna be in da 'hood, 'cause for da most part, they life in da 'hood.

Another hard part is gon be tryna get a job 'cause I gotta support my first an' last newborn baby an' my baby momma. (If you readin' this boo, I hope you know I love you!)

I can't be in these halls no mo', neither 850 county, which is my next stop if I don't get shhh together. An' y'all know probation is a damn set-up so you could fall again.

Ey yo' Beat, keep me in yo' prayers 'cause you know life's hell an' den you die!

-Smokey

From The Beat: If what you "do best" leads to a life in a cage, then what makes it "best"? We like the fact that you are thinking about your responsibilities toward your baby, but we wish you put finishing school in the mix. Unless you give yourself that foundation, getting work will always be that much more difficult. Take care of yourself first, and then you will be able to take care of your family.

The Challenge Ahead

Well, actually it ain't gon be hard for me to go home. The hard part for me is actually being away from my son. Maybe, yeah, it is gon be a challenge for me to go back out and have my freedom again, especially after being locked up half a year, not being with my baby for so long. So much shhh there is out there!

The worst part is that I ain't even going home 'til maybe 2009. Have lots of responsibility. First priority, my son.

-Monstrita

From The Beat: We've been reading your thoughtful pieces for a while, Monstrita, and we think you are up to the challenges you will certainly face when you once again become a free person and a responsible mother. The very fact that you recognize there will be challenges ahead tells us that you are ready to face them. It's tough to be away from your son for so long (and even tougher for him not to have his mother with him), but you can use this time to do what you need to do to prepare yourself for the challenges ahead. When you get out, your first priority is your son. But until then, your first priority is you.

Returning Home

I'm not going home, so it don't matter. They tryna play me and send me to Colorado. Colorado? That in the mountains and shhh. Hopefully they don't.

-Angel

From The Beat: This is almost NOT worth printing in The Beat, Angel. This is the lazy way of writing, and laziness will not move your life forward. Of course you will be going home, just not as soon as you'd like. The most important thing to take into any new program, whether it's around the corner or around the world, is your own attitude. If you expect to find nothing useful, guess what... You'll find nothing useful. But if you approach it with the attitude that you have things to learn (as we all do) that can help you in your future, then guess what... You'll learn things that can help you in your future! We don't know where the Colorado program is, but much of the state is as flat as the Bay. But if it's in the mountains, they are truly beautiful. Make the most out of it!

Drinking And Smoking Is Not Healthy

I think my life is unhealthy because I always drink and smoke with my friend and get in fight too much. I like that 'cause it make me feel good. We beat people up when we drunk or high because I can't control myself.

-Ka Cheung

From The Beat: Look up the word "paradox" in your English-Chinese dictionary. The paradox in your life is that "it makes you feel good" to do the things that you, yourself, have described as unhealthy. It's also unhealthy to be put in a cage like the one you're living in now. You know why you lose control, so you also know what you have to stop doing in your life to regain control. When will you do it?

A Healthy Life

Ahm livin' the good life, feel me Money lookin' right, mah folks showin' me love, except fah tha old farts. But ah be on one, doin' what ah do.

But it's '08 and now shhhh is different. Ah ain't been in ma 'hood since June 3rd, and tah me mah health is messed up major time. Bein' away so long from the block feel weird, like ah just got brought in this world with ah funky, polluted environment. But yeah, though, ah ain't 'bout tah say "no mo."

-Jabba

From The Beat: So, this is the good life, eh? No girls, wearing other boys' drawes, eating nasty county food, doing what you're told... We prefer the "bad life" of freedom where we can make our own choices...

Fake Love

Well, I'ma tell y'all some about love. Damn, bro, all that shhhh is fake. I'm telling you, don't trust no girl up in this world, 'cause we may think they faithful but inside their hearts, all they care is if you from one block or from one street. They care about money, drugs, and clothes. Well, I'm telling you for experience. I been through it and don't fall in love with no, no, no, no, girl, 'cause love is cool, but you gonna regret it in the bottom of your heart!

-Shadow

From The Beat: We're sorry that you had a bad experience with love, but that doesn't mean that all girls are fake. In fact, from what we read in The Beat, it's the boys who are most often the cheaters. It is the boys who put other things ahead of their girlfriends and end up being taken away by the system. We're pretty sure that, one of these days when you're older, you'll change your mind about love...

A Healthy Life

Whats' up wit' it Beat? It's ya girl Kia, and right about now my life is very unhealthy. Why? Because I'm sitting in jail for one, and for two, this unhealthy food is killing me slowly. And why is that? Because it's all rubber and gummy.

-Kia

From The Beat: Pull the lens of your observations back a little, and re-examine what you've written here. Is your life unhealthy because you're here, or are you here because your lifestyle is unhealthy? If you know what you did that led to becoming a slave of the county, then you also know what is unhealthy about your life. As Jesus put it, "Physician, heal thyself!"

Hard To Face My Family

It's hard because I have to face my family, friends and classmates. They gets mad at me 'cause I'm in jail. It's my first time and I'm the only child.

-Lil' Allen

From The Beat: Are you mad at yourself for getting locked up? We hope so, because you have the power to keep yourself free. You know what you did that led you here, so you also know what you must stop doing to lead yourself away from here...

On My Way

Yeah, this yo' boy Curt hit you wit' the no braina. I'm back another week. I can't complain. They trying to send me to Glen Mills, but I'm really not up for all that shhhh. But it's something to think about. I'm trying to get a group home, but I don't think they gone mess wit it. But what make this vacation different from all the last times I came here, I might go far as hell dis time.

But I holla at y'all next week, stay up.

-Lil' Curt

From The Beats: What is it about going to Glen Mills that makes you describe it as "dat shhhh"? Since you've never been there, how do you know what you'll find? It may be the best experience you've ever had. There's no way of knowing 'til you experience it. But wherever you go, we hope you keep an open mind, and look for the good you can get and not the bad.

Fake Ninjas

They said they were down to ride and die to the end, no matter what the situation is. When it came to thumpin' or getting jumped, we had each other's backs like compatriots at war. When it came to money, the four of us always had ideas on hypes to eat on the block. We took two cars, but we got caught with one. Big bra took the rap so the lil' homies wouldn't go down.

All of us said we was gone stick to the story, but the two in the back snitched. I was the only one stickin' to the story. Big Bra and me was the only real ride or die ninjas. I went to the halls 'cause I wouldn't snitch. Big Bra went to county facin' three to five... and the snitches get out the same day.

You think you know someone and can trust 'em, but when it really comes down to it, you got a chosen few and yo'self.

-Lil' Man

From The Beats: Of course, if you didn't do anything that you could be snitched out about, then you wouldn't be here either. The entire system is built on a foundation of snitches, right up to the death penalty! (There are many people waiting to be executed not because they pulled the trigger, but because the real trigger person testified against them in exchange for leniency.) There's really only one way to win this game, and that's not to play it...

My Unhealthy Life

My life is not healthy because I'm sitting in jail. When I get out, they up here talking about a damn ankle monitor. I was on the run, so ain't got nowhere to live. So now they sending me to some group home shhhh which I'ma run from. Police be hatin' 'cause I'm black!

-Seeda

From The Beat: Well, if the police hate on you 'cause your black, why do you keep given them power over your life by doing the things that lead you to lock-up? You're sitting in jail because of something you did, and not because you were snatched off the streets because your black. (We know hundreds of black people who are not snatched by the cops because they don't give the cops any reason to snatch them...) You can keep pointing your finger at "them" if you want, but until you take responsibility for your own choices, you'll just keep running from — and to — another cage.

Waiting

I don't think I'm going to have a hard time going home because I feel if I go home there is going to be no trouble for me. Right now I feel nothing's going wrong for me, so that's what I'm looking forward to. I can't wait for that one. Right now I've been trying to wait.

-James

From The Beat: We're curious to know how there is "no trouble" for you when you are locked up? We're happy you're looking forward to going home, but you need more than that to be able to stay out of here in the future. So, how will you achieve that goal?

I Remember

I remember one time I was chillin' with one of my ladies at my house when one of my other ladies came over. At first they were fighting each other. Then they both got hella mad at me.

-James

From The Beat: Gee, we can't imagine why they would get mad at you.

Returning Home

Me against the world

Obsessed with money and guns never cared too much for a girl

Cross that line and I will knock off your world
You could run from me but there is no escape from these two two threes

Born and raised amongst a thorough bred
Give a damn about them colors all that matters is green

Riding on foo's since the days of elementary
You could stay on your toes but the Mossberg will take you right off your feet

By the way the mask I rock is for dirt never owned a pair skis

Working the kitchen life I just graduated culinary

A stick up kid opposite of the tooth fairy
Never wore a wedding ring but to these streets I been married

Now watch your steps in my neck of the woods
'Cause the 'jets could get scary
Kids dying on the block and it's intended no such thing as them random shots

Feel your body go numb like when the chiva gets shot
Boy this game could get cold and awfully dark when you all alone

But who do I turn to where do I go
Turning colder then snow
Harder then stone

See this place you may perceive as a war zone is the place I call home!

-El Michoacano

From The Beat: See that place you call home is the same place where mothers cry/ And it's a place where youngsta's like you take penitentiary chances every time they ride/ You say all you care about is green but how do you get it when you're in jail/ You're obsessed with money but if your mission was to get it, it looks like you've failed/ But you choose your life and what kind of weight you wanna carry/ but in a war nobody makes money, only the people that's working in the cemetery/

Staying Out

What's up Beat this Young Cash how I'm gone to stay out this time is by getting on my grow man. Ya' dig?! It's all fun and games 'till you hit eighteen. No more calling your mama for help. So wake up or County will wake you up. I'm gone get at y'all next week!

-Young Cash

From The Beat: Do whatever as long as you don't come back. You're right though, 'cause some people it will take County to wake them up. Don't let yourself be one of those people. Get out and stay out!

What's Up

What's up Beat? It's me, Luis, just waiting for my court date on Monday. I might not be here next week. I might get out of here on EMP for several months. My PO said that to my mom and dad - that I am going to get out of here on EMP, on Monday. That's all I got to say. Peace out.

-Luis

From The Beat: Write to us from the outs Luis. Let us know how you're doing. And we still want you to say hi to your Chihuahua.

It's Hard

It is hard when people are talking about you all the time. You think people can walk all over you everyday? They think it gets to you, but you don't let them get to you.

-Yo Boy

From The Beat: The trick is to know when to 'open up' and when keep your barriers up. It takes a lot of practice. You don't want to shut yourself off from the world because of the behavior of ignorant or mean spirited people. So look for the balance. And choose your friends wisely.

Bad For My Health

My life was a healthy life. I had everything I wanted in the palm of my hand. One little mistake made it all disappear and now I'm looking at a penal code 187.

My life out there wasn't based on any special effects it was real bullets flying and real homicides. Everything that I go through is a real struggle. Blue, red, white lights is all I see. I take a look back and they're still on my tail. When I got caught all it gave me was a one way ticket to prison.

-Lk

From The Beat: We understand that sometimes people make crucial mistakes when they don't seem to have anything. But you say that you had everything. Why would you trade everything you had for a long prison term sentence? Why did you feel like you had to do what you did? What you had wasn't enough for you?

The Confrontation

One day my homie and I were chilling, getting drunk at his pad. Before the night started, it was coo'. We were drinking some O-E. Later on that night, we hit up some party in San Jose. So he didn't leave our side.

Everything was coo'. We were chopping it up with some females and drank up all the beer, until I notice some guy walking up to me. He confronted me about something that happen. Then out of the cuts somebody side busted me and the next thing you know me and my homie were getting down with foos from the party. It was coo' even though we were outnumbered and I got the side of my face scraped up from the concrete in the street. It was just one of those nights.

After that me and my homie went back to my pad and I washed up all the blood from my face. Before that I already made plans to go kick it with some females later that night so we kicked it all night at my pad and got drunk.

So yeah that ended up pretty much a good night even though I got a scar on my face now. Well all right Beat I'm out.

-Ja

From The Beat: Damn that's a messed up situation to be in. You need to be more careful. You're lucky you only got scrape on your face. Try to stay away from situations like those. Don't party to the point that you're not in your five senses, 'cause this could lead to more serious injuries or maybe catching a serious case.

Missing Out

The hard thing about going back home is catching up on all the stuff you missed and want to do. There's a lot I missed out on movies, South Park, family guy and the Dave Chapelle Show. Missing out on music, missing out on fast food, and missing out on the girls I know.

-St. New

From The Beat: Yeah it's true you've missed a lot by coming to jail and spending your time in here instead. But you can always watch the Chapelle Show, You can always watch South Park, Family Guy, and you can always talk to girls. But you can't get your time that you did back. All you can do is stay outta trouble so you won't come back here and you won't miss out on all the fun.

On Truth?

"Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth. I sat at a table where rich food and wine in abundance, an obsequious attendance, but sincere its and truth were not and I went away hungry from the inhospitable board. The hospitalists was cold as the ices." – Henry David Thoreau

What is the meaning of the word truth? Is truth something you make and nothing more? Is there such a thing as an eternal, important truth? And if there is then why is it so elusive, so hard to see or know. Is God the truth? Is truth a God? What is it about truth, that it appeals to us so much. Lies are easy, comfortable, but truth is hard. You've always got to look to find it, and at the same time it is so much more satisfying.

Of course, there are some people that just can't handle the truth. It is simply too much for them. In this whole page, is there even a single word of that higher, larger truth? Or is it so much chatter? I don't think that real, ultimate truth can be written down, therefore I end here.

-Monk

From The Beat: What about being truthful with yourself. Maybe if everybody would realize the truth in themselves they wouldn't have to front or lie to anybody about the person they really are. We don't have the answers to your questions, and we don't even know if there are any. But there isn't nothing you can do but be truthful to yourself and to the ones that you love. And even the ones that you don't love. Because in the end you can go about your life and not worry about having regrets on what kind of person you were; if you were true in everything that you did.

Home?

I don't know what it will feel like being home again because this is my first time in juvenile hall. Hopefully, when I get out, the freedom won't get to me and I won't be sent back here again. I wonder if people will look at me differently.

-Wanderer

From The Beat: Don't waste time wondering if people will look at you 'differently'. Focus on how you'll behave differently so that you won't ever have to return to the hall.

Stay Up

What's up? It's that home girl 'Lil One coming at you once again. So, today I've been here for two damn months. Not that long, but I got stuff to do and being here is a waste of my time.

Well, I got myself in here again, but I ain't got nothing to say about that. I'm getting out soon, so I only got a couple days. To those in here doing hella time - keep your heads up, be strong. Well, I'm gonna let this go then. Late!

-Lil' One

From The Beat: So, the one thing about which you have nothing to say is why you're back here. But you complain it's a waste of your time. You'd best address the real issue, or we might be seeing you again.

Doctor

Umm... I don't know about the doctors here, but the nurses are crazy. When I first came here the lady wanted me to pee. I told her I couldn't but she made me any ways, and when there wasn't much, she got mad and started to yell at me.

-Kinesha

From The Beat: She was probably having a bad day for reasons that had nothing to do with you. So don't let it bother you.

Returning Home

Well, this is Shorty coming out from this unit. Any way, about today's topic - I'm feelin' it... about me going home. I am willing to go home and I would love to not hang out with the same people. I am now willing to go out and experience new things in life and go out with my daughter. I've never had a family member in jail, or in the halls.

Talk to you later Beats. I'm out.

-Shorty

From The Beat: Do well out there. It's not just yourself you're responsible for now. We know you know that. Please - don't be shy about asking for help when you need it. When you're finding help for yourself, you're also finding it for your daughter. Before you leave the hall, make a list of all the people you can reach out to, if you need to. Ask your counselors to help you with come up with a good list. It won't have only the names of true friends and relatives on it, but trusted social workers, doctors, and other adults who can be counted on. And you should have phone numbers and addresses for everyone on your list. This is called a safety net. We all need one.

What I Want

They got a young rap star locked in the max. What's up with everybody? It's ya boy Yung Tone from the streets of East Palo Alto, locked up over here in Santa Clara County.

I'm gonna make this my last time being incarcerated, because I have got ambitions of becoming someone. I want to be more than just a number in the system. I want to work in this mug. I'm gonna hit that college.

-Yung Tone

From The Beat: What are your ambitions? Got any plans to make them yours? Before hitting college, you need a high school diploma. Do you have it? Are you working towards it? What's after college? Ask this question to yourself, "Am I convinced?"

Going Home

The hard part about returning home is when you been locked-up too much and when you're out and you're in you're house, you feel hella weird. Sometimes it feels like if it was just a dream.

Also when your out and you want to go to the streets it feels like if someone is following you and looking at you, so it's hard cause you would want to go to your shh. But if you don't you got your family or hyna(girl) or vato to be there for you and will help you. Hey pues alratoz(all right then) and God bless you all, and keep your head up.

- R

From The Beat: Why are you worried about how people are looking at you? The main thing about going home is you trying to make a change in your priorities. When they let you go home they are giving you an opportunity to prove yourself why they should let you have your freedom. Don't let yourself down. Take advantage of the situation. We know it might seem strange going home at first because you have to get use to the changes. But don't let that make you feel weird especially when your gonna be surrounded by your loved ones.

Mental Health

I hate mental health because they act like you're a little kid and they talk to you hella weird. They're noseey and if you don't talk to them they get mad and if you talk to them all they tell you is: it's okay. There's no point. Stay up.

-Jazmin

From The Beat: What would be helpful for you, when talking with someone about your mental health? We know you don't want to be addressed as if you were a little kid, but let's say that problem was out of the way. Let's say that you are talking with someone who respects that you are a young person on the edge of adulthood. What then? What would make a conversation meaningful to you, and helpful?

To My Unborn Child

Dear God, I ask of you to watch over my child that is soon to be apart of this world. I ask of you to make the best of his life and lead him into the right path. Please God even if it takes my life, help my child. Make sure he's healthy and is a man of God. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

-Lil' Jon

From The Beat: This is a sweet prayer to your unborn child. We congratulate you on your soon to be child. How are your feelings about being dad? Are you nervous? What kind of advice would you give your child so he won't repeat any of the mistakes you've made?

The Hard Part About Returning Home

For me it's not hard I mean I'll be happy to be home. But then the hard part is letting your friends know you're out cause when you're out they come and influence you to do stuff. And influence you to do stuff. And there's a saying shit flies down hill pretty fast. And what I mean by that everything could be going all good then out of nowhere your homie or family could come around and pass you a 40 ounce and a blunt. And next thing you know you cut your house arrest off and go on the run and get all kinds of charges.

Then when you get caught you're doing all this time over a forty ounce and a blunt. So those are my challenges when I get home. But I'm going to work on that 'till next time, later.

-Ceaser

From The Beat: You bring up a very interesting point. A lot of you youngsters do make a small bad decision that turns into a snowball effect and just keeps getting bigger and bigger. One bad decision leads to another and before you know it you're in a deep hole and can't get out. But if you make a mistake don't run from your problems cause you're only gonna make things worse. If you make a small mistake just suck it up and face the consequences.

Returning Home!

I think the hardest part about going home is the fact that I am only going to be on probation for 10 days. I won't have anybody to be on my back all day, everyday - just my family. I am a little worried about what I'm going to do after. I know that I want to get my high school diploma, and after that, maybe go to college.

Well Beats, that's all on this topic, but to all, keep your head up and don't let no one get you down.

-Payasa

From The Beat: You keep your head up, too. Keep looking around. That way, if trouble approaches, you can get out of the way. And you've been around the block enough to recognize trouble. Best wishes to you from all of us at The Beat.

Going Home

The day is almost near
The day I cannot fear,
For the day I go home
I can't stand to be alone
The people that I miss so much
Missing the softness of their touch
Each day that passes by
Brings nothing but tears to my eye
Being here makes me so mad
I can't stand being sad.

- Twenty

From The Beat: Being away from home is hard for anyone - it is especially hard for young people. Do you feel like being away from home makes you want to act differently when you go back?

I Only Got Love For My Family

I only got love for my family 'cause my love for my hynita(girl) died 'cause I always got played and lied in my face. So I hope one day this crazy vato will fall in love again or find someone that can show me that all the hynas(female) aren't the same. Also that she can do anything for me and she's down for what ever. Pues Alrato (All right then)!

- R

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear that you got played man. But you live and you learn. All women are not the same, but you do have to be careful. Some are gonna be good some might turn out bad. But you have to have faith, and also be a little more careful when you choose.

The Hard Part About Returning Home

I think a challenge I have at home is not smoking. I might be tempted by the evil ways. Well I do go on the run a lot so I feel I may be caught back up in that if I go to my previous state of EMP. Well these are the some of my worries.

-Lil' Jon

From The Beat: We don't know what to tell you for you to realize how valuable your freedom is. It's up to you. Do you want to get high and go to jail or be sober and have your freedom? It's your choice. We know it's hard especially with all that kind of stuff around you. But you have to be patient and follow the rules if you want to be in your own house wearing your own clothes, or you can just do the rest of your time here. Decisions are all on you.

Doctor, Doctor

I've always wanted to be a doctor since I was younger. I want to be one to help people. When I get out, I'm gonna go to CCOC and do training in medical assistance. I hope it goes well cause I'm ready to turn my life around and actually do something positive. And make my Ma proud. I hope I get out!

-Nu Nu

From The Beat: Being a doctor or a nurse are truly great professions. There is nothing like healing people. We wish you luck on your wonderful dreams.

The Pain

The tears in her eyes
make me think twice.
I don't like to see my mother cry.
There's a lot of pain inside.
I can't understand the reasons
I have hard times.
My brothers and sisters
growing up in foster homes
to group homes.
I'm the next
heading there too.
My mom's all alone -
I just want to go home.
I miss my little homies.
Can't they just leave them alone?
Drugs taken but the pains not taken.
I'm tired of this.
I want the life I miss.
Well I'm out Beat,
too much pain writing this little poem.

- Ronnie's Girl Tinker

From The Beat: Sometimes it really is painful to express how one feels through writing, but it is a way to express it without having to put those feelings into words and saying them. You seem to have a great way with words.

Life

I'm going to write on the topic of a healthy life. To me, I think a healthy life is when you become a man about yours and grow the hell up and stop playing childish games.

I've been locked up since June 4, 2006 which has given me a lot of time to think about what I should do when I get out and I've gotten to the point where I get out and I've gotten to the point where I realize I only have one life to live and the majority of the kids in here don't realize that, that's why they still thinking that getting drunk or smoking that blunt and hustling for your feria(money) is the life. They don't see outside the box.

You get one life, one life to get what you want out of it. Being Mr. Mas Chingon(Big Boss) and shhh. That's not something you want your kids around, que no(right)? I know damn well my kids ain't going to see none of that. I want my son to stay fitted and getting jocked by all the hynas(females) he passes, and to lead him in a way towards money and girls and being a man also.

A lot of the raza(our people) out there have talent that they don't use, nor their mente(brain), so a lot of them let the system strap a couple of strings on them and play 'em like a puppet. Chale(not me) I'm going to use the strength of a horse that I have and use it to get back in football when I go to college. I'm trying to get that real feria(money) that'll let me get what I want in life. Well that's all from this guy so Alrato.

-Joseph

From The Beat: So what would you teach your son about being a man? Is being a man being about money and girls? What kind of moral values would you teach him? How would you teach him? What would happen if he got infatuated with the fast money and girls? How would you tell him to slow down? Isn't there anything else you would want to teach your son besides money and girls? You said you didn't want him around a negative lifestyle right? You said a lot of people from your race don't use their mind why do you think that? What we see is a one-track mind. What would you tell your son about school, proper manners, or lessons about life?

It's Hard

The hard part of returning home is seeing the reaction in everyone's face wondering if everyone missed me or even care that I'm home or even noticed I was gone in the first place. Hoping that I can get back to school and graduate and be a better influence on my little brother. And also do something with my life and not be a screw up all the time.

-Bryan

From The Beat: We're sure you're heavily missed around your household, especially, your little brother. Nobody wants to you see you in them county pants. When you get out don't let anything distract you from your goals. Set a good example for your brother.

Returning Home

Beat, well I am just waiting so they can send me to LA to do my time.

It's going to be hard for me when I get out because I still going to be living at my neighborhood. I am still going to see some of my homies. I am still going to see the same drug. It's going to be hard but I am going to try because I don't want to come back in here cause I prefer to be out there with my loved ones. Have fun out there, partying, etc. then seeing the same walks everyday.

-Pinzon

From The Beat: Yo' little homie you have to find a way to risk temptation at least 'till you get off probation. You can still chill with your boys but you have to tell them that you ain't trying to go to jail. If they yo' real boys they'd understand. There's only so many chances you're going to get. Take advantage of each and every one.

Blessed

Well Beat Within let me tell you how I got my nickname. It had to do with a doctor, well here it goes...

I was only sixteen at the time and I was wearing the wrong colors on the wrong side of the city. Some guy came up to my head and pulled the trigger. So I went to the doctor's and he told me that I only got gazed. And he said I should be called "Lucky." And ever since then the name stuck with me. So wherever I go I just say the name "Lucky."

And hopefully I'm lucky enough to get my story in The Beat so that way you know who I'll be and the reason they call me Lucky.

Love from this unit. To all of you in the hall.

- Don The Lucky

From The Beat: Damn that's real luck right there! How do you feel about this experience? Did you learn anything from this experience? We hope you're not claiming colors because next time you might not be so lucky. We hope that you take this time in the hall to reflect on your life and what you wanna do with it. We're glad that nothing serious happened to you and you've been lucky. But how long are you planning on testing your luck. You should use that as a life changing experience and thrive to get out of here and live a better life.

Because She's Leaving

My girl is getting out. At first I had doubts, but I know what she is about. I love her so but she gotta go. I'm gonna hold it down until we come around again. I want to be best friends 'till the end. That's my girl and right about now she's leaving. We had our fights, but she is my delight and when I get out, um, we gon' get together...

I think I'm gonna cry, and be very sad, but when I get out I'm going to be bad. We gon' do it big, we gon' be the world's hottest couple. And if the hatas want to hate me and my girl, I can throw it down and rumble. I love you April.

-S

From The Beat: Make sure any rumbling you do is with your mouth and not your fists. Let ignorant people stew in their own bile. Don't let that bile poison you.

Hard Part

What's up Beat? This Pink from Santa Clara City, the hard part of getting out is catching back up with life where you left off. Your homies doing their own shhh and you not being there. If you had a girl, she might be running behind your back. So just some advice: Don't get locked up.

-Pink

From The Beat: Do you feel like your friends forget about you when you are locked up? Does that encourage you to stay out of Juvenile Hall?

The Fear Of Returning Home

What up, Beat? Well, the hardest part about returning home to me is fear. The fear I mean is that I'm scared because I know if I mess up one more time that I'll be gone for a longer time.

Knowing that I'm gonna get out is just a weird feeling because I think that I'm gonna mess up again. But I'm gonna have to be strong and man up and make a change because I ain't trying to go away for 18-22 months. I'm hoping that when I get out that I stay positive and not come back but I'm gonna try my best to stay out.

Alright well I gotta go for now. Later.

-Martizzie

From The Beat: We all have anxiety that we aren't going to do well, but since you are thinking about it and wanting to do better - perhaps you can ease into hanging out with your friends and have strategies not to get into trouble.

Rescued

What's up Beat, today we are writing about being rescued from something bad.

Well the first time I got locked up was because I was at a scene of a stabbing. My friend were getting jumped by around twernty heads and one of my friends stabbed two of them.

It all happened at the mall and we were pulled over across the street at the Lanes. Well the DA wanted to keep me in juvenile hall for a while, but my PO fought to get me out.

My first time I was locked up I was only in for three days.

Now this is my second time and I'm in for the same shhh. Haha. No one came to save me this time though. I've been locked up for 10 months. I just got sentenced to the ranch I'm leaving soon. I've been here for so long it kinds feels like leaving home.

-Xnotoriousviet

From The Beat: In your story, you make a good point. We're not likely to be rescued every time. Would you say that you took it for granted that you got lucky the first time? Why did you find yourself again in the same situation?

If I Get Out, Will They Remember Me?

I sit in my cell and think about my home,
my mom, my sister, my dad, and my bro.

I hope they don't forget me, because I've been away so long.
I know I won't forget them, but their voices are long gone.

-Big Keno

From The Beat: Sweet poem Keno. We guarantee you - they have not forgotten you.

Left Speechless

When I think about love, a girl always pops into my head. It is a special someone but I don't think she knows that I like her because I'm always locked up. But when I was around her one time when I was out I was so speechless. Because every time she talks to me I didn't know what to say. And everything that she said to me just took my breath away. But when the time comes around when I get out and I see her again I won't be left speechless because I will know what to say.

-S

From The Beat: We've included your writing in this weeks issue because you explain the funny thing about attraction. It happens to many us... struck by someone either because of how the person looks or their character. Let's flip this around: what kind of person do you want to be that causes others to become speechless?

Brightening Up My Darkest Day

I remember when I held you tight
Holding you so close and never letting go
You remain by my side
Through the good and through the bad
You're always on my mind
Through the days and through the nights
You're the one that I love
Can't picture my life without you
That beautiful smile
Brighten up my darkest day
All I could say
I love you

-Ace

From The Beat: Have you watched the movie "Cold Mountain"? This movie does a great job of relaying how powerful love can be and how destructive mistaken-love can be. We know real love because it doesn't stress us out or distract us; instead, real love propels us forward.

Fake Love Story

A love story that I remember is when me and my ex-lady were walking on a beach talking to one another and trying to get each other in the mood. But wait it gets better!! I woke up in juvenile hall and realized that it was just all a dream...

-Lil' Tim

From The Beat: We've included your writing because it is an example of life inside the hall for many young people. Some people hate dreaming; when they wake-up they get a rude reminder that they are locked-up. Other people enjoy dreaming; it keeps them excited about life. Which one are you?

Without Love

Me without love, never have experienced love for a girl, been with so many but never could love, not that I didn't want to just never was there. Wonder why, I had so many but have never has love, even if I wanted to have it, but just never could. Only love was for my family or for cash. In love with my family, but not with a girl, maybe because I was raised not to ever love a girl. Maybe one day, but not for now, maybe one day I will be with love, but right now I am without love.

-Martin

From The Beat: Your write an interesting reflection on your experiences with relationships. What do you mean that you were raised not to ever love a girl? Most everything about us has to do with how we are raised; it is great to hear that are thinking about such things.

Something Special Inside

This week my love story is about this girl that I met on a program in San Jose. She looked at me and I looked at her and I think we both felt something special inside of us. So when the program was done then we both went outside and talked to each other. We both got each others numbers so then it was time for the girl to leave. So I told her I would call her later tonight so I did call her then we talked for five hours.

She told me I was the first guy she ever talked to on the phone that long and she loved it. Then she asked me if I was single, and I said yes. So she told me would you like to be together I said of course.

So we went out for four years. After four years her and her mom went back to Texas for good.

She asked me if I wanted to go with her to Texas to live with her and marry and have babies but I told her I was still young and I can't leave my family behind I told her when I'm 18 I will go to Texas where your at and I will stay with you there. For now I'm just working hard. That was my love story.

-Luis

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing with readers about your relationship with this young woman. We never know what circumstances will come our way in life. As we get older (hopefully) we come to figure out the best ways to deal with love and challenging circumstances.

The Beat

Hey Beat, this Scoob - coming from this unit, and I m pissed. Every time I write to The Beat they never publish it. What's wrong wit y'all?

-Scoob

From The Beat: Is it possible there might be something wrong with what you're choosing to submit? Are you writing 'real' stuff for us? Are you letting Beat readers into your life in an honest way? We work hard. We're very busy trying our best to give a voice to incarcerated youth who are willing to be real. We try to print every honest effort to communicate what's going on in your lives. We do make mistakes. Sometimes a piece might "fall through the cracks". If that's happened, we apologize. But don't give up on us. Write the real stuff and we'll put your pieces in The Beat.

Rescue Me

Kicking it in the hall
Looking at this wall
Thinking screw 'em all
I need help
Can't get out of this game
Did too much to get this name
You know I got this fame
Can't call me lame
So I can't get away
Got no words to say
I think I don't want to stay
But like I said I can't get away
What do I do?
Don't want to end up in the SHU
But need to stick with my crew
Need to pay my dues
So we take our cruise
Around our town
I've put it down
So we don't clown
I need help I ain't playin around
Need to change my life
I don't like to carry my knife
I got hot like a passion
So I do my smashin'
I got this dream
I need to do my thing
Get away
That's all I can say
But I need to stay
Can't leave the bay
I need help
What can I do
Need to change my life around

-PI

From The Beat: You share an important point about street life—that it is difficult to just walk away. Many people who live the street life have to be loyal otherwise they risk their own safety, many people have drug addictions that keep them in contact with shady people, and often leaving the banging life means having no friends. All of these are issues that readers have to face...

Trouble

The hard part of coming home is going back to the same thing and getting in trouble. I want to go home and do good, but bad is flowing around. I can't just leave it once I am in it. Once you're committed you're in it - no way out.

If you're not in it yet - my advice is not to get in any thing that will get you into trouble.

That is all I have to say for this week. Take care Beat, and Beat readers.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Thanks Anonymous. We know it's tough out there. Bad habits are hard to break. That's why it often comes down to having to make a big choice - goodbye to your old friends, or goodbye to your freedom and your family. If your old friends equal the behavior that gets you locked up, it's time to change the equation. We hope you'll make the right choice. Freedom and family sounds good to us.

Memories Of My Grandma

I remember eating a whole bunch of bananas when I was young, and throwing up because I ate too much. I was right next to my grandma. I miss her and love her.

-M

From The Beat: There aren't too many people in the world who understand what it's like to barf up bananas, but good grandmas qualify. We're sorry for your loss.

I'll Take What I Can Get

This may sound crazy
You might not be into this
Well if I can't be your man
Just let me be a friend with benefits
What you got to loose
You already felt pain
Yet I'll treat you like a lady and give
You love just the same
As of now you may have doubts
But in due time you'll see
I care more then most
I'm different I'm unique
No need for hugs
No need for kisses
I'll just be your friend with benefits

-Dia

From The Beat: What is so great about this lady that you risk giving her everything and not getting anything in return? She must be something else or you're simply overlooking the fact that it is much more painful to give and not be reciprocated, than it is to be without her.

The Hard Part About Returning Home

The hardest part about returning home is my homeboys. I try to go home from here to do good for my family, but the homies prevent that. I get out, do good, chill with the homeboys and end up in here. I ain't trying to knock them. I'm my own man and make my own choices. At times with my family it's kick back and do good, and at times with the homies, it's that "homie mentality" on my mind. Peer pressure is all around. But I never do something because some one wants me to do it. If I do it, it's for myself and no one else. I don't play puppet. Everyone has his own hardest parts. As for me, you already know. I love my family and got love for the homies, but for now I'm gonna handle. And do my time.

-Cash

From The Beat: We respect that you are your own man, but as you say: peer pressure is all around. And if you find, when you are around your friends, that you repeat the behavior that gets you locked up - the evidence is loud and clear. You either value those few moments of can't stop, won't stop more than your freedom, or you don't. You get to choose. For now, the price of hanging with the homies is months of being locked up in juvy, that is - the loss of your freedom. If you continue with that choice, it will turn into county, and then into prison. Pretty simple. You are choosing a few minutes or days or weeks with the homies over a lifetime of being with your family. You are choosing a few moments or days or weeks of being with the homies over a lifetime of freedom. If you are your own man, then make the choice that's best for you and for your family.

Still Here

What's up Beat Within? I'm still here. I haven't gone anywhere. I've been here one year and two months. They won't let me out. But I am going to get of here on the 28th. I am going home on EMP. I got to follow the rule. If I don't follow the rule I will go to jail for 8 years. So I am going to follow the rule. I don't want to go to jail. It's going to be easy to stay in my house for several months. I can do it. So that is what's going to happen. When you come back next week, I'm not going to be here. I am going to be home. That's all I got to say, and I will miss you guys. Late.

-Luis

From The Beat: We'll miss you too, Luis. Say hello to that Chihuahua of yours, the one that runs into glass doors. And be good, Luis.

Grief

What it do do, Beat? How's it hanging? Well, as for this dangerous crazy youngsta – alright, I'm almost out in a couple of days. But, it's not the same 'cause one of my best homies ain't here with us today. He passed away a couple of months ago.

I was trippin out 'cause I seen him earlier that day. Only if I would of invited him to the party I was going to. But I don't know why I didn't. He would always go everywhere with me, but I don't know why he didn't come to that party. Maybe if he did, he would still be here with us. But he will always be in the hood. I will always remember my lil' homie.

-Birdy

From The Beat: When people die, we are always imagining what little moments could have made that different. Time become divided into things that happened before that person died and things that happened after. Thanks for sharing your thoughts on your friend.

Life Skills

I feel I messed up, but – in time – I will turn it around. See, I have a nephew that I mostly feel responsible for taking care of. His dad is in the army, so I feel like a father figure. But my plan is to get out with a job because I got life skills and will turn around with the right mentality to provide and show him the right way – not the way that got me in here and hope every one out in this place does the same for their loved ones because that's all we got.

-Maric

From The Beat: Sometimes it takes being responsible for someone else to turn our lives around. It sounds like you are going to be a great role model for your nephew.

This Girl

Here I am again to tell you about my new friend. She's different from the others. She can become one of my lovers. I've only known her for a couple of days, but she makes me feel okay. When I'm down, she comes to me and turns my frowns upside down. Me and her got similar problems – maybe that's why we get along.

Well, I'll be out in a week or so – I hope me and her can go somewhere, you know. It's a trip how I just met her and know this. I got feelings for her, I just hope we don't fall in love cause I've been hurt and now I can't take no more pain. So I'll just wait. Well, I'm out Beat.

-Ronnie's Lady Tinker

From The Beat: Meeting someone new and falling for them is such an exciting time. We can only imagine what it is like to have this experience while being locked up, while your emotions are already in so much flux. We hope it works out for you.

The One Who Cares

What up, Beat? This Playboy coming from the lucky number unit. Well, I'm gonna tell you about the one who really cares and loves me.

My mom is the one who I am talking about. She is always there for me and comes to my courts and visits me. She is my life and the only woman I love in my life. I'm gonna do better for her when I'm out and be a good son for her and take care of her the rest of my life. She is my one and only love and that is never gonna change. So that is the one who loves and cares for me the most.

Stay up.

-Playboy

From The Beat: This is a beautiful piece of dedication to your mother. Did you realize the way you feel while you have been locked up? Sometimes we don't appreciate our parents until we get in trouble and realize how much they do for us.

The Challenges Of Returning Home

The challenges of me returning home is really challenging because things would change out there. The thing that worries me about going home is hearing about losing a loved one.

Well, I don't really think about really getting out of the gang because once you're in a gang there's no way out. Well, my dad helps me go to school and staying healthy.

-Pee-wee

From The Beat: Is that true, what you said about gang life? It may seem that way while you are in, but there are people who have left and changed their life around.

Hard Part Of Going Home

The hard part of going home is if you don't have a plan, you're just going to end up coming back. And if you never make a plan of what your going to do, you might just end up coming back over and over again. When I get out I'm gonna try to stay up and go to school and not screw up anymore so I won't end up coming back.

-Cristian

From The Beat: Exactly, it is all about having a plan and a strategy – like really thinking about what you are going to do if you are out with your friends and they start smoking while you are on probation. If you think about these situations in advance, then you will feel less pressured.

Going Home

First off, I'm writing with my utmost love and respect. Well, it's your boy from San Jose. Well, I've been locked up all year – almost all of 2007 and won't be out 'till May.

Well, the hardest thing for me is when I get home, I'm gonna have to deal with all the drama with the family and others. Shhh that is gonna happen to me, but I ain't tripping no more, 'cause whatever happens happens.

-Lil' Mike

From The Beat: You have been in here a long time, but it seems like you have learned to manage the stress and anxiety of the future. That is an important lesson to have learned at a young

Locked Up

Hey Beat, I'm returning again for my second time. It sucks being locked up, but it's all good. Last time I got lucky and set free; this time the DA didn't like what he was hearing. Being locked up sucks but I guess if you do the crime, you do the time.

Hopefully this will be my last. Keep your heads up.

-Viet

From The Beat: It seems like you have accepted your punishment. Do you think being locked up will help you change when you get out this next time?

Things Change

Hey, what up? This is Congo.

The hard thing about returning home is that things change. My dad would act different. There's new rules around the house.

I had an aunt that past away. RIP Auntie Vergie: 1-20-08.

The other thing is that I gotta do good for once and walk a straight line and do good! Do my programs. It hella hard to catch up with life. I been here for a month, gonna be two. But when I get home, I'm gonna make things easy and do my best to not come back to juvenile hall and make my mom and dad proud.

-Congo

From The Beat: Losing people when you are locked up seems like one of the hardest things. Perhaps your dad changed the rules because he felt like he wanted to give you more discipline. Did it help?

Can't Handle This

Livin' life with a broken heart.
On the outside I'm good, but on the inside I'm fallin' apart.
Never thought it would be this hard to feel the shame and
the pain,

you make me feel every day.

Why couldn't someone warn me?

I never thought being in love would hurt,
especially when the one I love is my first.

I gave everything to you.

I held you when you needed me to.

When you take off your doo rag or just randomly...

I scratched your head for you.

You told me that our love was true
and that without me you wouldn't know what to do.

Why can't you be like Valentino and "hang up your
cleats because you don't wanna play no more"?

I guess not every playa can go down that road.

I wish that I was a nurse, so I could give you
another dose of this medicated love I prescribed to you.

But, like most people all you do is refuse

for me to make you better.

I guess that's why you let her

come between us

without a fuss

and without a fight.

I might as well do what I might...

drop you quicker than Snoop "droppin' it like it's hot".

'Cause I need to learn that your not

my world, my heart, and you don't got all my affection.

I learned my lesson.

I can't handle this.

So sorry to say but the bell has rang to the fullest and your
time is up.

You dismissed!!

And trust me you won't be missed.

-Babyboo

From The Beat: This isn't only something you can't handle, it is something you shouldn't put up with. Relationships require lots of commitment, maturity, and trustworthiness; is this something you think juveniles can give? Usually not... so why not focus on more important things like school? What are you going to do next time around to make sure boys aren't bringing you down. Usually the people that care the most are closer that we think. Look around.

Going As Far As Anyone Has Ever Gone

Being brought up on the Southside taught me
everything I needed to know

Of course, it was not exactly the best things that I
learned

When I'm sitting in my cell at night, I think about
getting released

I am going to have the same people knocking on my
door-asking me to do the same things that led me here
This time is the last time, and I mean THE LAST TIME I
enter these doors

I am taking my stand and starting new

So when some fool tries getting hard, I am going to be
the bigger person and walk away from all of the fighting
When all my boys are hitting me up asking to get birded
or get blown, I am gonna stand for my new start and
finally say NO!

I am gonna prove that just because I am going to
grow up on the Southside does not mean I cannot go
anywhere

I am going as far as anyone has ever gone

Remember this name...

Remember this face...

-Angelica

From The Beat: You have chosen to rise above your circumstances. This takes a big person. Peer pressure is very powerful and brings down many people. To think for oneself is admirable. To be oneself is even more admirable.

My Monster

My monster overall is drugs

I have done drugs for a very long time
And it really scares me to go home again

I want to overcome my monster

I have tried several times

I have been to rehab three times and jail twice

It seems like every time I get out it just gets worse
Overall it goes good for a month, then I start to sneak off
with my old friends and start to party

In the morning I will realize that I have messed up

Then I get scared and run

I do not want to live my life like this

I do not want to live my life wondering when I am getting
out of jail

Am I going to O-D tonight?

I do not want to hurt my family anymore

To see them cry and hope and pray that I come home
o.k.

I know I have it in me to do what is right

I ask myself, "Am I willing to do the right thing?"

-Autumn

From The Beat: Drugs are a constant battle. This battle must be fought on a daily basis. Peer pressure and environment are very important if you hope to win. Living life in a present mind set and being ever aware of influences is very important. Drugs often make us forget about the people who care about us. Think of their pain. Many people are counting on your success.

Hell To Get To Heaven

It's like I'm going through hell to get to heaven man
And I'll do any thang just to see the world again

Feeling pain

So much pain, I'll go insane

But I can't complain

Because my life hasn't changed

I also feel that rage

Being locked up inside that cage

Now all I do is feel me age

All I'm given is page after page

Hoping I'll make it up on a stage

But I've never been paid minimum wage

Hoping I'll never engage

Back up on drugs and thugs and thangs

Feeling that rush up in my veins

Wishing I won't be swanging and swerving lane to lane

A life is hard for me to tame.

-Andrew

From The Beat: What are you going to do to change yourself and your life so that you don't cause yourself more pain? Regardless of the events and circumstances that have happened in your life, you are the only one that has the power to change. Even a thing as small as your attitude can make a huge difference in the way you experience life. We hope that you recognize the things you can change and do it!

Don't Be A Fool

I dropped out of school

because I thought that was cool

But later on I found out that my ass was a fool

Because I ended up in jail

again and it felt like hell

Sitting in my cell

and then I asked myself why did I drop out of school

because I was a fool

thinking that the thing my friends did were cool.

-Alonso

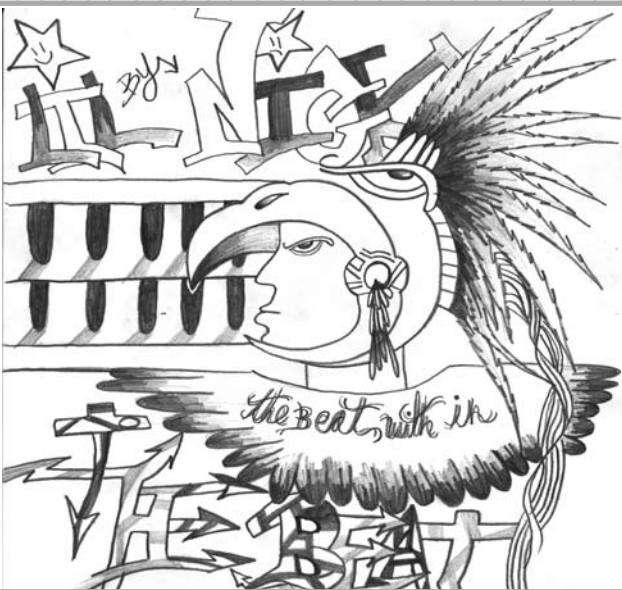
From The Beat: Well, it looks like you see where you went wrong. This mistake seems pretty easy to solve - GO BACK TO SCHOOL! If you continue to ditch out of school, you will keep finding yourself back in jail, and very possibly in even worse situations. Education is the key to a successful future, so we hope you learn this lesson before it is too late.

A Few Days On The Outs And I'm Already Back

I'm back in the halls, and it's a witch. I was out for less than three days before I got locked again. I hate being in this place, not getting to see my baby (boyfriend.) I miss him so much. Well, when I get out I'm gonna try my hardest to stay out and when I get out, I'm gonna get me a big burrito.

-Angel

From The Beat: Once you were finally free, what was going on in your head that you decided you'd risk doing whatever it was, knowing if you got caught, that you'd be brought back into juvy? What's going on in your life on the outs that gives you some stability, some sense of purpose, that will sustain you and give you the strength to work toward achieving it, so you won't ever have to go back to juvy?



Good Times And Bad Times

To begin, they call me Sad Girl, because sometimes I am happy and sometimes I am sad, because I miss my homegirls and my homeboys. Also, coming back in here got me sad, because I didn't want to come back. I am so stupid for coming back. Also, what got me sad was that my homegirl died. RIP, Jenny.

-Sad Girl

From The Beat: You're right, Sad Girl, you are often happy and sad almost at the same time, which can make you seem so vulnerable. What else is going on in your life on the outs—a family? School? A job? that helps you feel secure, that you can build on when you're free again, so you won't go back to juvy?

Money Hungry

I say yadidi, I say yee

If it's no concern, then I press delete
Girls give me money, 'cause they fooled by the smile
I'm raw as fresh beef I went to school wit' cow
I care about her and she love me
I'm the one and only, she can't dub me
I soak up the game and used right
Money Hungry all day and night
The world is a monster, beat it up
If pain is for breakfast, then eat it up

-Mainey

From The Beat: Why do you need anyone else's money, let alone that of girls who are charmed by a fake you? Why so you suggest the world is a monster that deserves to be beaten up? Do you eat up any pain for breakfast? If so, please explain in an essay next week for The Beat. What does money bring you that you're so ravenous for it? How are you willing to earn that money you write you require?

Freedom From My Window

When I look out my window
I want to see freedom
Freedom to me is not having a PO
Getting locked up in the halls
Having to come and go
Not having a curfew
Being able to kick it until one or two
Freedom to me is being able
To walk down the street dressed in my color
Staying faithful
Not having to get pulled over by the police
Just 'cause I'm dressed in my baggy khakis
Freedom to me is being able to drive
Without a license on the streets
Cruising, bumping the beats...
Being able to drink a Mickey or an OE (Old English malt liquor)
Without tripping 'bout the po po
I can't get locked up any more
Hell, nah, that's a no no!

-Shy Boy

From The Beat: It would be fun to just be able to come and go how and whenever you want, wouldn't it? Down deep, maybe it's the baby in each of us, but sometimes we all want that, even if it's just for a day or so! But here we are in the real world—we can't drive drunk because we can run into others and hurt them or worse. So, okay, with certain freedoms curtailed, what does that wide world offer you that is so wild and marvelous that you're willing to go out and explore it?

Scared To Get Out

I'm scared to get out. I'm scared of starting all new. When I get out I'm going to be eighteen and be thrown into a whole different game. I have to go to a new school. I'm going to get another job and I'm going to have to get along with my parents, which I haven't been able to do for the last eight years of my life. If I don't get along with them, couch surfing I will be. So I'm scared of messing up when I get out.

-Lil' Mama

From The Beat: It must be hard, because it seems like part of you wants to be entirely independent, but the other part wants to stay home with your family, and that's entirely normal. But as long as you're in your parents' home, you have to live by their rules. Can you talk to them and see if you all can agree on what rules are fair, so everybody will be more or less satisfied and peace can reign in your home?

Look At The Moon

As I sit here locked up
I think of you guys...
Missing you
I want to cry but I can't
I have pure, dry eyes
Always thinking 'bout the homies
Reminiscing when we used to sip on forties
It was always sipping sparks or drinking Mickeys
Kicking it 'til the next day
With the homies...
I'm locked up for a violation...
It sucks being on probation...
But just keep your heads up
And look at the moon
Because before you know it
I'll be out soon

-Shy Boy

From The Beat: When you're locked up and alone, or even when you're far away, it does help to watch the moon at night, because you know it's the same moon that overlooks your homies who are having fun on the outs, so you can feel close to them, even though you can't be with them right now, right? Nice poem!

Cheating A Cheat

I remember on April Fool's Day, my girl and her homegirls tried to play me and say that my girl cheated on me. She really didn't, but I thought she did, because they made a good plan.

So what I do is go and cheat on her and with a girl that was her enemy. Everyone found out and my girl knew what I did and she told me how it was a joke, what she did. She also brought her friends to tell me how they planned it out. I felt kinda bad, but I told my girl that she shouldn't have messed around like that. Things went bad after that. I have another girl now, and I don't talk to my old girl any more.

-Sneaky

From The Beat: What started out as a sort of funny joke became really sad for your former girlfriend and you. It's too bad that you messed with each of your deep feelings for each other, because it destroyed your relationship together. We're glad you moved on from this joke that ruined a good things the two of you had.

Life's A Witch

Life's a witch and then you die
A ninja so stress just want to let loose and cry
Don't know where my life is going
So I don't even try

-No Name

From The Beat: Okay, life for you right now may be confusing and overwhelming, and that can hurt. Now that you're in juvy you have some time to just stay quiet and see if you can sort out what's messing with your head, your life. Is there anyone you trust who you'd like to talk to? Maybe that person can listen and help you figure out how you can jump start your strengths so even little by little, you can get your life going the way you want it to go!

This Life I Live In The City

This life that I live in the city
This street pity
Tryin' to make a dime out a penny
You hear me going dumb
Smoking out my lungs
To the point I can't think
J Mak said it
"Maine, all on the yellow bus"
Shakin' my head
No dreads in it
But I ain't trippin' though, man

-Lil' Hus

From The Beat: What's the point of smoking out your lungs? What do you think J Mak meant when he said, "All on the yellow bus"? What created the impression for you that the street is pitiful?

True Me

I feel broken inside. People talk mess about me or at me. What have I ever done to people? I think I'm one of the sweetest people, 'til you get on my bad side. I feel I hold up a sign that says, "Please hurt me," and this is what you say to hurt me. I've heard so many people talk mess to me that I start to believe it. I care about everyone, and I believe there is more in people than what you see, so I don't know why people mess with me. The sad thing is they think it's funny.

-Lil' Mama

From The Beat: There are people who actually enjoy messing with the minds of people they think are vulnerable or that they can hurt, so they do. Ignore them, walk away, the next time they try to mess with you.

NEW MEXICO

The Hard Part Of Not Returning Home

The hard part is because I am not returning home. I am heading to a treatment far away from home, and I am not going to go home until I finish up my time like 3 to 4 months.

I have an unhealthy life because my mind makes me want to fight, but God has taken my life so my mind is all on him and my heart is to. My life is so healthy and so good because God gave me treatment instead of a commitment for one year. This is my hard part not returning home, but some day I can return home and be a good brother, uncle, and father to every one at home.

-Jermaine

From The Beat: The key Jermaine is to take one step at a time, don't rush your treatment, most of all don't run from your treatment. Take a few months to get focused so you can be the good brother, uncle, and the father you want to be.

I Hope I Do Well

When and if I return home I hope I do well, but home isn't the hard part it's escaping the hood.

When I return home I need some one to help me stay, because if I'm all alone nothings keeping me from running away.

My mom always tells me to choose the right friends, but how do I know they'll be right in the end. When I return home I want to do great, go back to school and get my life straight. When I return home I want to get off probation, so I can turn out different then other kids in this nation.

-Amber

From The Beat: You may not be able to escape the "hood", all you can do is your best. Remember your mom's words, you may not know if some one is going to be a good friend. Know that a friend will not ask you to commit a crime, or do drugs or any thing that you know is wrong. If they do, know for sure in the end they will be a bad friend.

Mental Health

Mental health, people think it's funny, nope. It's ok if you need counseling, because people actually all people need to talk about their feelings and problems. Sometimes I'm really glad I got in the system because I can get the counseling and help I need, and because I get to take a step back and look at my problems. Why? Think negative when you just mentally abuse yourself, yup, I heard that from my counselor.

-Sophia

From The Beat: It's good your getting the help you need, it's just too bad you had to get the help you needed behind bars. We at The Beat hope you continue getting the help you need.



Mental Health

Mental Health is when somebody like me is incarcerated for so long. Once you are in this place you can't do what you want. No more eating, sleeping, watching TV when you want, it's like once you're in your cell all you see is white walls. When your in your cell you can't come out when you want, it drives you crazy. It feels like you can never come out and when you're out of your cell all you can do is watch movies. You start to get depressed; you start feeling like killing your self. You can't use the phone when you want or see your family. When you are in here you have to keep yourself from yelling and cussing at staff or even fighting, because if you do all that will do is put more time on your hands. So, while you're in here you have to learn from your mistakes.

- Rastice

From The Beat: Your last sentence is the key; learn from your mistakes, as for the rest of your words, you should be limited on what you can and cannot do. Perhaps being behind bars will make you think twice before you decide to commit a crime

Screaming And Yelling

Pain and sorrow
Why all these hard feelings?
This is supposed to be my home
Abuse me, and accuse me
It isn't helping me one bit
You say your sorry but
Then why do you do it?
I want help
I'm screaming for help inside
Feels like God ain't helping me
For one thing family ain't helping me
All they do is make me black and blue
They say don't say nothing
If I want to stay home
So what do I do?
This is supposed to be my home

-Sophia

From The Beat: Know one this Sophia it shouldn't hurt to be a child physically or mentally. If you are being abused by your family say something, if you can't talk to some one in your family talk to a councilor or another professional to let them know what is going on before it get out of control.

Missing You

I miss the way you talk
I miss the way you walk
I miss seeing your smile each and every day
I wish that I could find a different way to go
I've always wondered if when you passed
If you were thinking of me
I really have no clue what to do
I've always thought that I was going to see you one day
There's never going to be a day where you're not on my mind
You're always in my prayers
There's a picture of you right next to my heart
I love you brother with all my heart
You'll never be forgotten

RIP J. L. Padillia 8-8-88 to 8-13-07
Love you Brother

- Kristin

From The Beat: It's not easy to lose someone you love. The best you can do is continue living with the memories you have of your loved one.

My New Life

I've changed a lot since I've been here.

At first I came in acting hard and wanting respect from the staff and residents here. I thought I knew every thing. I learned how to respect people, and to get respect.

I have a lot of patience with people now, and I've gotten closer to the Lord. I've got familiar with the word from the bible. I tell all you don't worry about anything instead pray about everything.

To all you reading my story just remember the Lord has plans for us all, plans to succeed not to fail. He will end our captivity and restore our fortunes, so don't think being in here is your life because it's not. God put us all here to realize what where doing wrong with our lives, and to give us a chance to show Him we can do well. You are not alone in your cells, God, is waiting for you to pray and talk with Him. I now look forward to going to my cell, so I can talk with my Father and read His word.

Just to let you all know I pray for all of you around the country, that are caught up in the system. I ask you all to keep your heads up, and ask for forgiveness. Pray for me as well brothers and sisters.

- King Henry

From The Beat: It sounds like you have grown up, unfortunately you've had to grow up quicker then others your age because of your situation. Hold to your faith and continue to grow, life can only get better from here on out.

A Change

Ever since I was first brought up being a young teenager I thought I would never be in trouble with the law, drop out of school, or have a daughter.

I had a healthy life, getting honor roll since I was in the 5th grade to the 8th grade, and deserving everything I wanted.

All my dreams crashed from then on, I started or got introduced to drugs. I partied almost every day being at the age of a young teen.

Now, this is my second time being in juvenile detention center and I think about how I could start over, be with my daughter, and the father. It's still hard to get through things but I know I can do it. I can change and turn my life to a positive and healthy life. Every person can do it.

-Amber

From the Beat: Yes, you can do it, but you must stay positive, focused and you must be willing to make that change. As the saying goes words are cheap. Show yourself, your family and us that you can change. We at The Beat would much rather hear from you while you are in the "outs" rather then while you are locked up.

The Challenges Of Returning Home

We'll the challenges I face returning home are my peers, and the rules that are at my place.

The worries I have about going home are that my mother is going to be harder on me because of what happened.

If I need help I will go to my grandparents' house or my aunt's house for my needs.

If I get emotional I will go to my mother for my emotional help because I always do that because I feel that she gives me support in that area.

- Sidney

From The Beat: The first thing is you mention are the rules at your place, and how your mother is going to be harder on you. First is it your house or your mothers? If its your house that is one thing, but if it is your mothers house then you should have strict rules, and your mother should be hard on you even more now that you've been locked up, so you don't end up back in the D-home.

Hello Beat Readers!

Let me take the time to introduce myself to the ones who do not know who I am. My name is Nick Floyd and I used to be a regular in the "Pieces of the Week" column for Alameda County Juvenile Hall. That was over four years ago when I was 17 years old and going through the hardest time of my life. I am currently serving a 10-year, 8-month sentence at New Corcoran State Prison, and I have 4-12 years left. I was arrested in July of 2003 for multiple violent felonies, one of them being attempted murder. I had just turned 17 years old in March 2003 and a few months later I found myself facing a life sentence and tried as an adult.

I haven't read The Beat for a while, but came across one recently. I read all of the pieces that were written in all the Juvenile facilities, and after reading them I came away with mixed emotions. I saw pieces that were cries for help, pieces that glorified violence and negativity, etc. I remember when I was a teenager, hard headed, defiant, and was the first one to act like nobody knew the things that I went through. It was just me being stupid and assuming things, because what I went through on the streets growing up was in all actuality nothing compared to my elders. As a youngster I used to glorify the negative things that the world has to offer and decided that I wasn't going to listen to anybody. I dropped out of school, smoked weed, drank and popped ecstasy pills full time and eventually found myself behind the walls of Alameda County Juvenile Hall.

At first, doctors projected that the victim of the attempted murder was not going to live and my own attorney that I should brace myself, because my charges would most likely be upgraded to special circumstance murder. But for some reason, God blessed the victim and me by letting both of our lives go on. I had to fight my case for a couple years, but in trial I beat the attempted murder and ended up being convicted of two robberies and an assault with

Nick Floyd was a primetime writer for The Beat when he was in the max unit for a couple years over in Alameda County Juvenile Hall back in 2003. During that period of his incarceration he was tried as an adult. He is currently serving a long sentence at Corcoran State Prison, where he came across a recent issue of The Beat Within. He decided to write in and share his thoughts after reading it, and we are so glad he did. It's awesome to hear from Nick, who week in and week out stepped up huge in our max unit class sharing his thoughts with us all.

a deadly weapon with great bodily injury. I was blessed and fortunate enough to end up with the time that I got, because it was supposed to be a lot worse.

As a youngster I always wanted to be a convict, but now that I am one, I hate it. When we do things that alter our lives, we never take the time to realize how many other lives we are altering at the same time. One of the worst wounds that you could ever receive is a broken heart because it is an eternal wound that does not heal easily.

Picking up a gun doesn't make you a man. Being a convict doesn't make you a man. Talking about all the work that you put in on the streets doesn't make you a man, nor does it mean anything in prison. What makes you a man is being there for your loved ones, being successful and keeping a clean slate. You do not impress people by coming to jail. You impress people by accomplishing goals and leading a positive lifestyle. Violence and drugs can get you only two places - a grave or prison, and that's it. A lot of you youngsters these days try to hide behind the hood, but what you don't realize is that your hood or gang doesn't care one bit about you because when you're dead or locked up, they are going to still be doing things and not reminiscing about you. A real homie would never lead you to danger.

Well, I hope that at least a few of you decide to read this. You don't have to end up like me, or even worse. Make that change before it's too late.

HERBERT B. SCHUELGERT

"Walking Through The Flames"

This testimony is for all those who don't think they can be saved, those who might doubt the power and mercy of God. The rays of God's magnificent light shine through jails, juvie halls and prisons on all things He created.

I've spent several years in a control unit - one of the most severe forms of punishment present in modern prisons. It is a lonely, harsh, cruel place that grinds away at the mind and soul. How I got there is more important than how bad the place was. I had committed many serious acts of violence towards other prisoners and staff. I had become consumed by the toxic emotion of hatred. I lived in a twisted world where violence, intimidation and hatred had blotted out all goodness. Even as I write this, discomfort comes and sends dark clouds past my eyes. Sorrow for all those I hurt touches my soul.

There was a time when I was so enraged with bitterness I was almost irreversibly close to becoming an evil monster. I had veered so far off the righteous path that I should not have been able to emerge from the darkness. Maybe some of you can relate to such. I should not even be capable of writing these words, yet I am. I am because I was precious in God's eyes and so are you. He sent Jesus the Good Shepherd into the deepest shadows to find me. Just as surely as a miraculous recovery from a terminal illness, I was healed on the inside and I was freed from the distorting

It's wonderful to hear from our new friend, the faithful, Herbert B. Schuelgert, who steps up huge from the heart to touch us readers this week. Herbert writes us from the Crossroads Correctional Center in Cameron, MO. We know his latest effort speaks volumes, so we hope you take a few minutes to give Herbert some of your undivided attention.

constraints of the evil I had nearly been consumed by.

In Dante's Hades (Hell), a sign hung at the entrance that counseled damned souls to "abandon all hope." I blindly walked into those flames but was able (all Glory to God) to exit the abyss with a message. Do not walk in the direction of those flames. I have seen men and women who have forfeited hope to embrace evil. These unfortunate people don't retain any trace of innocence and bear no resemblance to the children of God they once were.

Friend, even if your heart has become dark and hardened as mine once was, I want you to know that in Jesus there is hope - your only hope. As long as you hold on tight to some goodness in your soul, God will come to wipe away your tears and relieve you of your inner pain. Suffering is like a fire. It has the power to purify silver and gold and to strengthen steel. But it also has the power to consume and destroy.

Turn to Jesus now, my friend, and never lose sight of Him again. He will lead you to a place you may have never known - one of peace, redemption and everlasting hope. Praise be to the Lord Almighty forever and ever! Amen

I decided my life was far too valuable - to me and to my loved ones - risk losing it on this night.

Following last week's Part 1 of Michael Cabral's journey from child gang member to adult prisoner and gang drop-out, today we bring you the second half, which begins in the justly infamous prison, Pelican Bay. Part 2 begins in the middle of a real-time phone conversation with his best friend, Manuel, who cannot understand Michael's choice to drop out of the gang (the reader can feel the pain on both sides of that phone call), and alternates between that conversation and his own explanation for that choice. The Beat is honored to have a writer of Michael's depth of thought and writing skills (which he is perfecting from his temporary home at Salinas Valley State Prison). But more than that, we are proud to call him a friend. He has much to teach, and we have much to learn.

Young Thugs and Our Daughters

Tonight as I waited in San Francisco to catch a BART train home I witnessed something I am compelled to share with you. I must tell you it challenged me in ways I still reflect upon as I write this. I imagine I will consider the situation even further in the coming weeks. My eyes have been opened wider to a reality we rarely want to consider, or that we rather think does not apply to those around us.

A train had pulled up and as soon as the doors opened the quiet station was awakened to the voices of two arguing people. I was down a ways and my attention was drawn to the commotion. I walked slowly in the direction of the raised voices and could see everyone around the two - a young thug and his young girlfriend - stood frozen, watching the fiasco. Nobody moved, it was as though everyone there wished they were somewhere else. The train the two had gotten off left the station for its next destination and much of the background noise dissipated.

The two were going at it. He attempted to walk away but, not wanting to be ignored, she following him step-for-step, shouting a litany of expletives that did nothing to quell the discord. He turned on her and then they were face-to-face exchanging the most demeaning, belittling, and disrespectful words two people should never hurl at one another.

No one intervened, no one moved towards him or her. It was as if everyone now wished to become invisible. I took a step forward, wanting to see more clearly what my mind was processing to be sure it was not imagined.

I heard him say to her (but in much harsher words) he had bought the very shoes she was wearing so shut the **** up. She did not. I saw him push her to the raised structure commonly found in the BART stations for seating and then forcefully take one shoe - then the other - off her feet. He threw the shoes across the station and onto the tracks. At that point she went quiet.

He raised his hand. I recall thinking, "Surely he's not doing this. Surely this isn't happening." She sat there, head bowed and still. He bent down and said something no one else could hear in her ear. He raised himself up, standing there now two feet taller than her seated and small frame. And then he punched her squarely in the face.

No one moved an inch. I found myself closing the gap between the two. Fifty feet and counting down...

She sat there recovering from her shame and embarrassment, and from being so completely immobilized by this young thug, her bearing slowly awakening to what had just happened.

He began to walk backwards away from her. I heard him say to her, "I'm going to shoot you. You wait till I see you again, I'm going to shoot you."

That's when I stopped moving. In that moment I had my wake-up call. In that moment I was forced to evaluate what my instincts had advised my body to do by walking towards the two. In that moment I had to stop and allow my logic to lead the way, and not my compassion for these two unfortunate youth.

How is it that these two could act out so violently and callously towards one another in the presence of so many strangers? What were they thinking of and what could have been so powerful to each of them that they could lose sight of all the people who surrounded them?

I decided I would go no further. I decided their fate was cast and they had each chosen to be who they are. I decided my life was far too valuable - to me and to my loved ones - risk losing it on this night. "I'm going to shoot you..." reverberated in my mind and brought the reality of what our society has allowed to be wrought upon our youth.

No one else moved. There were no BART police in sight. There were no caring parents to protect that young girl. There was no responsible father to awaken the virtue and integrity that I know still exists in the mind of that young thug. There was no community of caring and nurturing adults to intervene on behalf of both of these youth... there was nothing.

My train came moments later and I boarded it. I seated myself and thought about how that young lady might have felt. I wondered how defenseless and minute she must have felt knowing she could be treated so badly in public, around so many people, without any help at all. I could now understand how so many young women feel these terrible young thugs own them. And I wondered how that young man could have arrived at such a corrupt mental state that he could act as he did. I wondered, and I wondered...

And then I realized the truth of the matter. They acted the way they did because we are paralyzed by fear, self preservation, insensitivity, a collective disregard for community, and many other intricately woven variables, all working to keep us at bay.

It is my prayer that no one who reads this has a son or daughter who would act as such. I would wish that hurt, shame and embarrassment on no one.

I have chosen to share this with you because we need to start talking to all youth who might act out in these ways and help them learn another way. When you next visit with friends or family and you hear our youth talk about how cool it is to be a thug, or how safe it is to be with a thug, I hope you will remember what I have shared with you. I hope you will find the daring to say something that will plant the seed of change in the minds of the youth you can influence.

And I hope you never have to deal with the trauma our young thugs and inflicting on our daughters.

Things Change, Part 2

Now, it was Manuel's turn to row angry. He seemed not to be speaking into the phone any more, but rather standing two inches in front of me as he screamed, "What the eff was I supposed to do?!"

"How 'bout trust that I might be doing the right thing," I responded. "I don't care that it made you mad, Manuel. I care that you got mad before you knew what happened." Hurt and confusion were evident in my voice. "You know I wasn't gonna sit her and explain myself to someone who's never even been to prison. But if you asked me, Homie, I'd talk to you about anything and never lie."

Somehow, I could then physically feel Manuel thinking as a few tense, silent seconds gratefully escaped from under a big pink elephant tired of being ignored. Manuel asked me, "So, did you snitch?"

The question offended me, but I knew it wasn't his fault for believing that I may have. "Not even a little bit, Bro."

Manuel's next question made more sense to me: "Then, why did you have to back up from the homies?"

"Disassociate myself," I corrected his terminology. "And I didn't have to..."

• • •

Pelican Bay was a two-and-a-half-year long lesson perseverance. I arrived at that place with the typical mentality of an 18-year-old first-terminer. The first thing I was going to do was beat to a pulp the biggest thing moving on the yard and establish myself as someone not to be messed with. Then I was just going to do my time — because I was sure it was going to be that easy. But it wasn't.

On orientation status, I was locked in my cell with my celly for the first week and a half, until I was cleared by a committee to be a part of the general population. When I was cleared, I was moved to another section of the building I was in. even then, for whatever reason, there was still no program to be had, so I was stuck in my cell for yet another week. Throughout that week, my new "homies" (the ones I was provide with) would stop by my cell on their way to the shower and introduce themselves to me by name and neighborhood, and ask if there anything I needed. "I'm good, Homie. But thank you," I'd answer every time. "And they call me Tuffy."

On December 24, my building was finally released to yard — my first mainline yard experience. I spent the few hours we had to be outside walking around with an older man who had been in the "Bay" for a few years already. He introduced me to all the homies he knew, and showed me around. He showed me where the homies kicked it, where the homies worked out, where the homies played basketball, and where they played handball. Then he showed me where the Blacks did all these things, where the Whites did all these things, where the "Others" did all these things. By the time my tour of the "Bay" was over, it was yard recall. I thanked my guide for his time and went back to my cell, thinking of how boring prison was obviously going to be.

The next day (Christmas), everybody noticed that an unoccupied cell in our section had been filled. That afternoon, after a couple of inmates had introduced themselves to the newcomer and learned who he was, all the homies were made aware that he wasn't one of us.

We were all let out to dayroom that night, but the new inmate refused to come out of his cell. To that, one of the homies commented, "He's not coming out because those muthas aren't supposed to be on this yard, and he knows

it!" None of us actually knew the situation in Pelican Bay, as far as who was who and who couldn't be where. But none of us were going to call one of our own a liar.

At dayroom recall, all the cell doors in the section were opened in order to let the inmates back into their cells. Unfortunately for him, the new inmate's door was opened, too. He immediately ran to the front of his cell and yelled to the Tower Cop, "Close my door! What the eff are you doing?! Close my goddamn door!" But before the Tower Cop paid him any attention, an older homie looked at me and my celly, said, "Hey," and nodded toward the hysterical inmate. Nothing more needed to be said.

My celly and I, followed by a couple of other inmates, rushed into the newcomer's cell and punched and stomped on him for at least thirty or forty seconds until the second of two block-gun shots was fired and about eight C/Os showed up. We were all handcuffed and asked what happened. "No comment." Then we were taken to the hole.

When I got into my new cell, the C/O escorting me handed me a blanket and asked me, in a tone of voice which suggested that we've been friends for a long time, "So what happened, Man?" To which I shrugged my shoulders. The C/O laughed, closed my door, and wished me a merry Christmas...

Being stuck in the hole was, to say the very least, a miserable experience. Yet, I couldn't help it but to feel proud of myself for being there and for doing what I did to get there. Maybe it was because I assumed that my homies would be proud of me, too. From that first night in the hole on, however, I would only learn more and more how little I actually mattered to them.

About two weeks went by before I came into contact with any more homies. It was on the "yard" (where inmates are individually placed into one of about ten 8'x10' cages). In the cage next to mine was an older gentleman who greeted me with a smile and a nod, as two C/Os locked my cage's door and freed my wrists of the handcuffs wrapped around them. When the C/Os walked away, my friendly neighbor asked me if I was Tuffy. "Yes, sir," was my answer.

"You know..." He began to speak, though his thought didn't seem to be quite yet complete. When it was, he went on. "You know, there's a way you can clean all this up."

Confused by this statement, I replied, "I don't know what you mean."

It turned out that the man we jumped and the faction he ran with were people my homies had been trying to keep peace with. The jumping was completely unnecessary, and could have even started a war. When the other inmates involved in the incident (one of whom was the one who gave me and my celly the nod) learned of our mistake, they panicked, fearing the potential there all of a sudden was for being disciplined by the homies. They were all placed in cells near enough together to be able to communicate with each other. So, collectively, they decided to explain to everyone that the only reason they attacked that man was because they saw me attack him first.

"On jumps, we all jump" is one motto so they looked like a group of loyal soldiers. As if that wasn't bad enough, they even went so far as to say that I had absolutely no reason to attack him, making me look like a thoughtless troublemaker.

I was hurt, angry, and felt betrayed. In the biggest way, I wanted to defend myself. But I knew it would be useless. It was the words of three against my own. Besides, how could I stoop down to their level? So, feeling defeated and vulnerable, I asked my neighbor, "What do I gotta do?"

"We'll see," he said. And our conversation was over.

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I decided that if I was writing to someone who "loves me forever," there wasn't anything I couldn't say. There wasn't anything I needed to hide.

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There was only one inmate in my section that I talked to. He was a gang drop-out, so I really wasn't supposed to get along with him. But the loneliness that always comes with being trapped in a windowless hell wouldn't allow me to pass my judgments. His name was David. And David became my friend.

Throughout my first year in the hole, David was the only inmate who ever offered me any kind of support. When I was hungry, he had food for me to eat. If was bored, he always had a joke I could laugh at. And when life was getting to me, he was the only person willing to listen to me complain about anything I could think of to complain about — like being in the damn hole! Especially since I was only supposed to be there for up to six months. But somebody out on the mainline yard put me on their confidential enemy list making it so that I would have to be transferred to another prison (and, due to California's overcrowded prison problem, transfers always take a while.)

As time passed and homies came and went through my section, people began to become more and more aware of how close I was growing to David, and after about five months, the opportunity for me to "clean things up" was presented to me.

On the yard one day, I was once again neighbored by the older gentleman. Once again, I was greeted with a smile and a nod, and once again he spoke to me after the C/Os were out of earshot. Getting straight to the point, he said to me, "That fool David trusts you." I wanted to argue that David wasn't a fool, that he's a good man. But the stubborn homie inside of me held me back and was even a little embarrassed. So, I only continued to listen as he went on to explain to me that David would believe me if I told him I was a drop-out, too. Then he could get me into the cell with David, where I'd be able to "give that piece of shit what he's got coming."

Three or so weeks later, on the night before I was to move in with him, I decided to ask David why he dropped out. "I've just gotten soft, I guess," he laughed. Then he told me the story about the last celly he had who was accused, but never convicted, of a sex crime when he was fifteen years old. Since the accusation never left his permanent file (his "Jacket"), the homies never saw him as anything more than just a rapist, and felt he deserved to be stabbed. David refused to be the one to do it, making himself a target as well, forcing him to drop out.

At the first step I took into David's cell, he smiled the only genuine smile I had yet seen in prison. And, as soon as I dropped my property on the floor, he wrapped me up in the first hug I'd had since juvenile hall. I hugged him back and knew right away that I wasn't going to hurt my friend, and that I was no longer a homie.

C/Os and their higher ups know prison politics better than most inmates. They knew that I wasn't supposed to be living with David, a dropout, and they knew that because the homies would label me "no good" as well. So, all I had to do was go into a classification committee hearing and say, "I refuse to be released back onto an active mainline because I would not be safe there. My celly is already a drop-out, already endorsed to a drop-out yard, and I didn't stab him. I'm not going to stab him."

Now, I had officially "backed up" from the homies. I disassociated myself without bringing anybody down with

me. All that was left to do now was wait (from December 25, 2004, to May 23, 2007) to be transferred out of the hole in Pelican Bay to the drop-out yard I'm on now.

In the same week of that committee hearing, as though the gang-bang gods were making a last desperate attempt to keep me under their rule, I received letters from Danny and Manuel — my first from either one of them since my arrival at the "Bay." Both letters were just "Hi-how-are-you" quick reminders to keep my head up, basically full of nothing that stood out to me. Nothing, that is, except for Danny's usual ending of "I love you forever, Lil' Brother" which I stared at and read over and over, who knows how many times, until I finally found enough courage to write him back. I decided that if I was writing to someone who "loves me forever," there wasn't anything I couldn't say. There wasn't anything I needed to hide.

So, that night, I mailed a letter to Danny telling him about my disassociation. "... I can't do this any more, Danny," I wrote. "I backed up. If it's important that you know why, just ask me. I'll be down with you and have your back, always. But I'm all alone up here, Homie, and I gotta do what's best for me. Just know that I love you back forever." That was in mid-2005. Since then, all I've heard of Danny is people telling me that he'd advised them not to communicate with me any more because I'm "no good" now. For that reason, Manuel never wrote again either.

When it comes to Danny and Manuel, sometimes I feel let down and betrayed. Other times I feel like the betrayer. Most of the time, though — right or wrong — I just miss my friends.

• • •

"What do you mean, 'You didn't have to?' Manuel wanted to know. "I mean, if you didn't have to... why did you?"

I took a couple of seconds, trying to find the right words to explain why. Why did I give up on gang banging?

"Because I just wanna come home one day, Manuel. And anybody can see that I wasn't going to do that messin' around with the homies."

Seemingly content with this non-explanation, Manuel agreed, "I just want you to come home, too. And I could tell he was trying not to cry, possibly realizing the very real possibility that I might not ever come home. "That's all that really matters."

Just as Manuel finished saying this, an automated female's voice interrupted to warn us that we had "one hundred and twenty seconds left on this call." One hundred and twenty seconds left before my explanations no longer matter, because outside of this conversation, I'm still just a homesick no-good inmate. Danny's still a gangster-respect hungry homie. Manuel is still stuck at home alone, struggling to be his self, struggling with what's right and what is wrong.

"before they cut us ff, Bro," I said to Manuel, "I love you no matter what. I love Danny no matter what. Tell him I said to stay him. And you be good."

"All right, Mike. And I love you, too." And before he hung up the phone, he said, almost deliberately, "Good-bye, Brother."

"Good-bye..."

The Health Issue

In 2005, an advocacy group called the Prison Law Office brought a class-action lawsuit against the California prison system, the largest state prison system in the country. A federal court found that medical conditions in the California state prisons were so bad that they actually amounted to cruel and unusual punishment, and therefore violated inmates' rights under the U.S. constitution. The lawsuit, which was brought on behalf of inmates, found that the dangerously incompetent medical system in the prisons resulted in an average of 65 preventable inmate deaths per year. As a result of the case, the federal court removed medical care from the oversight of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and put it in the hands of an appointed receiver, who was given a blank slate (and a blank check) to overhaul health care in the prisons.

Nearly two years later, little has changed in the California prisons, despite the extraordinary powers granted to the receiver and his staff. In fact, the federal judge who appointed the original receiver has now replaced him. It remains to be seen whether or not the new receiver will be able to implement changes that improve medical care for inmates.

Did you know that prisoners are the only United States citizens with a constitutional right to health care? It's true. Many Americans have little or no access to medical services, which is part of the focus of this week's Health issue of The Beat. Although inmates receive regular check-ups, evaluation and medication while they are incarcerated, the poor and inconsistent care they receive, and the lack of available emergency services, make their right to care seem more like a liability than a benefit. In prisons, asthma attacks are the number one cause of preventable death. Of the 66 deaths in California prisons in 2006 that were deemed to be preventable, six were from asthma. In some cases, there was no emergency response team that could reach the dying inmate in time to help. In at least one case, prison personnel ignored the suffocating inmate, assuming that they were pretending to be in distress to be disruptive. In all cases, inmates with asthma were not allowed to carry

What an honor it is to have Jen Clarke in our pages! For the last couple of years she has been a faithful facilitator in our Beat workshops over in Alameda County, and most recently she had to take time off from the workshops to take the important steps in possibly returning back to school. We do look forward to Jen's return when time allows! She is so missed. We were honored when she wanted to write something on the "Health" issue. We apologize for not getting this in the editor's note, but we know in The BWO is even a better fit! More readers!! Thanks Jen for your powerful and important thoughts!

the life-saving medication they can self-administer during an attack.

As bleak as it is, health care in the California prison system is not without its bright spots. The Reverend Keith Knauf started the first prison hospice program in the country at California Medical Facility. Today, he is joined by dedicated inmate volunteers who do their best to make sure that no man dies alone at CMF. This kind of compassionate attention to the spiritual needs of dying inmates is increasingly important as the incarcerated population grows older and individuals deal with chronic conditions and terminal illnesses. Increasing numbers of elderly inmates face their final years behind bars, due to the three-strikes law and tough sentencing guidelines. Their health care needs are not being met. In some cases, they can't even get a lower bunk.

What about health care on the outside? To answer this question, we turn to our talented young writers who wrote on topics related to healthy living, doctors, and mental health for this issue. As we have been hearing from the presidential candidates, health care is a hot issue for politicians right now. There are 47 million Americans without health care in this country, including many readers of this editor's note. Young voices aren't often heard in the health care debate, so we appreciated hearing the viewpoint of you Beat writers who stepped up and told The Beat about your personal experiences or your ideas on how health care could be better.

Hopefully, one day we will live in a society where everyone has access to high-quality health care, regardless of income level or citizenship status, both inside and outside prison walls. Health care should be right, not a privilege, for all of us.

JESSIE MACWILLIAMS

We want to extend a big thanks to Curtis Cook Jr. for hooking up his friend, Jessie MacWilliams, who also writes us from a correctional institution in Selma, Alabama. Welcome Jessie! We look forward to hearing more from you in the coming weeks!

Is It Me or What?

To a brick wall I stare.

It's a room full of people, but it feels as if I'm the only one there.

I'm confused by the more I know.

How is the block I walk on hot when this world is cold?

It's strange how this locked up life feels;

As the world rotates, I stand still.

Is this real, crazy, anything at all

I'll trust a mass murderer than a man for the law.

How can I fix a puzzle with still something missin'?

Do you feel like me or am I trippin'?

KROSS

Kross is writing from Corcoran State Prison. He's almost due for release. We wish him the best and hope that he "won't trip and fall inside the government's vault" again!

Children Of Tomorrow

Children of tomorrow have arrived en masse

Strapped with mail of the highest class

Marching down the avenue smoking grass

Showing off their catch, their brown eye lass

Children of the world forcefully removed

Viscerated by society from all humanity

Sins of the father, a lush for a mother

The lost generation overwhelmed by calamity

You are the future, the dew on a blade of grass

You are young, that's your fault

Follow the law, societies de rigueur

I promise you won't trip and fall

Inside the government's vault

From The Beat: The following BWO's are "Throwbacks", selected entries refeatured from past issues. Enjoy!

An Excerpt From A Letter: Looking Towards The Future

November 13, 2001

I don't know if I told you, but I am in Vocational Landscape Gardening class. So I get to work around plants, gardens, roses, etc.. I'm learning a lot on how to beautify and take care of these things. I really enjoy it. I never saw or heard of passion fruit before, but they are really nice. They are small round orange fruits and the inside looks like a pomegranate. I especially like the name though "passion fruit" that's pretty cool huh? A lot of the trees plants etc. that we grow and take care of are donated to hospitals, convalescent homes and other such places. Maybe I'll get to work in a garden center or florist shop when a parole. I'm really focusing on floriculture in order to have those skills. I am also interested in interior design as I have the knack for that and an eye for beauty. I will be taking a correspondence course for this also which I'm excited about.

I'm trying to relax tonight. Some days I just feel different emotions that I'm not used to. So I try to sit with it and get through it in a more positive way since I'm not running away from it, and numbing it with drugs anymore. I am finding other ways to cope. I went to my self expression group today but it was canceled until Friday. Then I went to see a psyche that gives me pamphlets to help me deal with anger, so I didn't work today. Tomorrow night (Wednesday) I go to my twelve step meeting. All of these keep me focused in a healing direction. I think without them I'd feel lost.

I am working on a hardship transfer to another prison (Stockton) that's closer to family. I will have a better chance to see my kids from there. It's also a lot smaller than this prison, so less stressful. There's six to nine a room here. In Stockton there are two-man cells. With my health it would be much better for me, so I pray I get to go. I will let you know.

I pray for you and the young people there. I'm grateful to be able to write and connect. They have a chance with so many caring people to help them. Much Love.

Once again we bring you Amber, who has been steadily writing us for the past couple months. We are very thankful that she allows us to print excerpts from her deep and insightful letters. They are very helpful to all, as she describes the steps she is taking in improving her life. She speaks of the classes and groups she participates in at Valley State Prison For Women in Chowchilla where she is located. She also gets into why and how she expresses herself. Read on!

An Excerpt From A Letter: Being The Nice Girl And Expressing Myself

November 14, 2001

The hardest thing for me is to forgive myself. So much time lost. I can't go back and redo it! I can't make up for it! The pain and guilt is hard to bare. It's no joke! My girls didn't have to go to foster homes though and that's good. From my experiences, I wouldn't want to see any kids in foster homes.

I remember the foster home where the foster parents beat me all over her living room floor. She kicked me all over too in my stomach, my butt, legs, and my hair was all matted from where she pulled it so hard. After that, I blocked that time out until almost a year later, and my mom came to get me.

I was always afraid of violent people, so I learned to manipulate them and do what they want so I wouldn't upset them and get hurt. I always had to be a nice little girl. What a heavy burden! Well, I lost myself! After holding the hurt in for so many years (and pushing it down) when it does come out, it's real scary. These people are most likely all dead now, but I remember.

I haven't been writing anything for a while for my self expression group. I just don't feel it. Also new people come in and out, and I clam up when anything is unfamiliar or feels threatening to me. I almost quit a couple of weeks ago because they were speaking about being elaborate and putting labels on their writings, which I felt very uncomfortable with. I'm not elaborate and I don't want to be. I'm Amber, and I just want to be Amber without having to perform or look good or meet up to someone's expectations of who or what I should be! So at the time I'm listening and pretty much being still. Anything I write comes out when its ready, not any time sooner.

So I'll be in touch. Hope its okay to write you from my heart. Much care.

CARY GILMORE [7.26 ISSUE]

We are honored to give space this week to an old friend of ours, Cary Gilmore aka "34 Powder Pee." We haven't heard from him in awhile, part of it our fault too, but we're glad he hasn't forgotten about The Beat. Cary was once a participant in our workshops in Alameda County Juvenile Hall. Today he writes us th efollowing letter and poem from Hgh Desert State Prison in Susanville CA. Look for more in the near future from the talented Powder Pee.

Dear The Beat Within

First, I would like to thank you for your letter. It was very heart warming to read that I haven't been forgotten like many, many other people who have been imprisoned. I was happy to hear from you guys and gals at The Beat because it shows that your hearts are in the right place. You'll make a big difference in this world by caring for people who are less fortunate to have love elsewhere.

Well, I'm going to start writing my poems that I would ask you to put in The Beat Within. My writing name is "34 Powder Pee." Also, when you send you next Beat to me will you include a list of topics that I could write about and please ask questions (if you wish) about what's happening in the prison system and anything else you come up with. I will try to give the best answers, to the best of my knowldge.

Well, I'm going to be like a rose and close this letter.
Always love for The Beat Within

Ripple Little Water

Ripple little water,
Such enjoyable sight.
By day with the sunshine,
Or night with the moonlight.

Ripple little water
From the middle and expand.
Tiny waves after another,
Like the seashore sands.

Ripple little water,
I can sense the way you feel.
Don't stop rippling little water,
There's no beauty when you stand still.

The Ghetto

I was born with the ambition of wanting to be a thug and a true soldier to this here ghetto. I was blind to the righteous and good, and attracted to the evil and bad that surrounded me. Evil, and bad became the best of friends for they were the only ones who felt my pain. Righteous and good made things complicated while evil and bad showed me a quick and easy way to get money. Evil and bad introduced me to my role model a baller (dope dealer), and God was the preacher in the church pimping the community for the little we had. It's a trip when I look back on those days of darkness. How so little I knew and how so much I had to learn. I guess I was just a young man struggling, plotting on ways of survival in this deadly ghetto.

Living in this ghetto hasn't never been easy. If one said it was, he wasn't only lying to you but also himself. If you wanted to eat you got out there and hustled. Even though all odds is against you, you are determined to get out there and make it happen. No matter the risk, the consequence, or the struggle, all that's on your mind is no more pain and suffering. No more nights going to sleep with your stomach on empty. If I don't take care of myself who else will?

It's funny how we represent this ghetto but this ghetto isn't representing us. Because if it was we would all be successful thugs. But since it's not, we are victims to these ghetto slums.

We call it the game because we are stuck in our own fantasy. We don't want to deal with reality and the responsibility that comes with it. Instead we run from our

One of our favorite and most loyal contributors E-Money is back on these pages with what he claims is his best piece yet. We were moved by his commentary, and we hope you too get something from his piece titled, The Ghetto. E-Money was once a leader in our weekly workshops in SF/YGC. He is now serving his time in Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga CA.

own shadow and let Mary J(marijuana) escape us further into this fantasy. But allow me to say one thing "Life isn't a game, this here is real." That's what we fail to realize. You either get serious about it or prepare to be another victim to this thang we call the ghetto.

As I got older I came to realize that it wasn't no future in trying to be a ghetto superstar. I came to see the road I thought was the golden road was really a road of steel painted yellow. A road now stopped to destruction. I was digging my own grave and didn't even know it. I came to realize that there are bigger and better things in life such as reaching out to my fellow youngstas. But most of all, I came to realize that I didn't want to die in the slums of this ghetto.

I don't know about y'all but I'm tired of suffering in this ghetto. I'm tired of being on my knees crawling in this dirt looking up to those walking and stomping with pride. It takes a man to lay down when he's tired. A boy stays running around till his mother puts him to sleep. Well I'm tired of moma tellin' me what to do. It's time to grow up and be the man of the house. It's time to start leading my brothas and sistas up out of this ghetto, for this ghetto is killing us slowly.

GREGORY JOHNSON 14.19 ISSUE 1

Killers' Parents Owe Us An Explanation

(Massacre at Columbine High)

Where were their parents? That is a question, spoken or not, that is on the mind of anyone who wonders how the terror that stalked the hallways of Columbine High School could have been incubated.

It must have come in its infancy or in its adolescence, from the home. Yet we aren't sure. The parents of the killers, Eric Harris and Dylan KLebold, can help us understand.

But so far they have been wrapped in a silent, self-imposed cloak of seclusion, afraid to provide us with any insight. That more than anything in this confusing and baffling mystery, is understandable.

If I were them, I'd have sought out a protective womb, too. I would not want to face a battery of network microphones, or an antagonistic prosecuting attorney, or an angry parent of a child who had been shot in the face. I would hide.

But I would be asking myself - repeatedly asking myself - one question: Can something good emerge from something so evil? The answer, clearly, is: Yes. And you can help provide that answer. For the moment, your silence, your grief, your embarrassment, your shame, your sorrow, all can be understood. We can identify with all of that.

And we will give you time to console yourselves, to absorb the anguish of friends, to receive the comfort of those who are closest to you. But then, please talk to us. Only you can tell us what went wrong on Tuesday, April 20th, -not totally- but partially.

And please -please- don't be defensive. Just give it to us straight. Did you know what Eric and Dylan were feeling? Did you know their frustrations? Did you know the extent of their hate? Did you know of their obsession with guns

The following is the first of two commentaries that were written by our long-time friend, Gregory Johnson, who is housed in the Colorado Department of Corrections. Both pieces touch on his feelings towards the Columbine High School massacre in Littleton, Colorado. As Greg stated to us, "These articles gave me an out-option and something to keep my mind focused -it did help- I may not be the emotional type, but I may be a little sentimental. Writing this story kept me busy and just improved my lust for writing. I can't get enough." Look for Greg's second piece in next week's Beat, titled, Today's Adults Failed Test. You can read his second piece on page 59.

and explosives? Did you know of their obsession with German militarism? Had you ever reviewed their internet activities? Did you know of their addiction to violent video games and satanic music? Were you in touch?

It is not shameful if you were not. That only puts you in the crowd of many parents of teenagers who have veered, inexplicably, from the rational world. But it doesn't excuse you from an obligation to help us understand what happened.

These were your kids! You may have done everything possible to help them, to stay close to them, to respect their privacy, to give them some space.

You may have practiced so-called "tough love," and you may have been tolerant, you may have turned away, not wanting to believe what you were seeing, or you may have thought they were just going through a harmless phase of acting out.

But we need to know. Please -talk with us. For the others who died, and for those who might die in the future, you owe us, society, that much.

I can't stress this enough, we, as a community, as a whole, need to start recognizing and listening to our kids. Give them a chance! After all, they're the ones to lead us into the 21st Century. They are our future.

Peace and respect.

An Excerpt from a letter

It was good to hear from you. There actually isn't that much to say about life in here. I remember when I first got locked up, I was so torn up emotionally that I could just write about my perceptions reflected off my environment. After twenty months of incarceration I react to situations without thought, dealing with people in a way that doesn't offend them or put them on the defensive, while at the same time showing that I'm not a pushover. I've learned that though there is really only one type of respect, that respect can be gained in numerous ways.

To the immature mind, the easiest way to gain respect is to beat the hell out of someone. While being rather simple, it's pointless and in this environment more trouble than it's worth. Another way is to carry yourself in a manner that shows you're more mature, that you're not a pressure case. It may take a little longer to gain respect, but it's longer lasting and it's real respect.

After awhile, it gets to be old and it's nothing really to talk about, it's just like a boys' school.

I'm passed the depression, the anger, the fear, the pain and the loneliness. Now, I'm just concentrating on getting the most I can from the school system here, which isn't much.

I did visit the library and checked out a few books. One of them is a book of essays on sociology and different sociological issues both modern and historic. Two others are just my usual sci fi/fantasy. The library here isn't too big, but it's big enough.

I have a friend at Ventura School (CYA) that I write to, and she writes poetry as well. I'm including a poem of hers to you. She's quite talented and very intelligent.

Seriously, this place is beautiful. It should be a college. It is a school of industry, but it's tough to get into classes when you're already a (high school) graduate. I can't wait to get a job, make some money, but I have to wait until there is an opening. Meanwhile I'll sit here in the dorm and be bored.

Well that's about it. I'll send these poems. Stay cool, try to stay stress free, catch you later.

The Beat is proud to bring back to our pages our old friend, Bagpipes. Bagpipes was once a powerful contributor out of B9 in Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall. We're sure a few of you know him personally or know of him through his insightful letters and well thought out poetry. He brings a true gift to this special paper. His talents and knowledge have given incredible spice and vigor to us readers. Presently, Bagpipes is in the CYA/Preston School of Industry. The following excerpt gives us a taste of his life. Also, check out the poem, "Castle on The Hill." If you have been to Preston or know of someone who has been there we are sure they have spoke of "The Castle on The Hill." The rest of his work gives us a tour of what he was thinking while writing to us.

There For Me

There for me when I need a friend.
There for me when I need a hand.
There for me when the rest of the world
just don't understand.

Since the day we met you've been there
willing to listen, to offer your love.
It's almost like you're the answer
to my prayers from above.

Now I've been through changes
my heart has learned and grown,
and now I can return your love
the love you've always shown.

And now I feel complete
with you here by my side.
And now I feel I can open
I don't need to turn and hide.

Because I know you'll be there
like you always were
and I want to be with you
forever, of that I'm sure.

So please except these words
that come straight from my heart
and whisper I love you in return
and I swear we'll never part.

To the immature mind, the easiest way to gain respect is to beat the hell out of someone.

Zero Tolerance

These days our kids are suffering
our parents have lost control of their lives
our families fall apart in painful shards.

Our schools are pits of violence
Our malls breeding grounds for gangs
who knows what is in the cards.

Drugs run rampant through the streets
and teens shoot each other over a color
what's left for the future of our country
a zero tolerance world.

Personal liberty locked away
Freedom of speech neglected and abused
and the pain and hate just build and build
We have no room for God
to full of greed and lust for cash
zero tolerance for compassion.

We can't continue.

Castle on The Hill

Above the verdant valley.
Above the school redirection.
Above the lives of desperation,
sits the castle on the hill.

A silent watcher in the night.
A guardian rosy in the sun,
with mysterious air and grandeur,
sits the castle on the hill.

Empty but for memories.
Painful dregs of sanity,
full of lost history,
sits the castle on the hill.

Watching as we come and go.
Watching as we learn and grow.
Watching as the years pass on,
sits the castle on the hill.

Discovering My Brown Roots Part 2

My blood screams out to me in my veins and coaxes my mind to discover my Brown roots, my Mestizo blood. I now understand the many tugs and pulls in my heart, and the void of roots that would have otherwise kept it grounded. It is important to me to understand and embrace my Brown-ness.

My quest to discover my Brown roots begun before it was trendy to be Brown, before the sudden explosion of the Latin craze. There I stood, the odd one standing out. Even in my own home I stood out as the "White boy" amongst my Mulatto sisters. My world was Black and White – there was no hint of Brown. Brown was in the place of the barrio, a place I had not the fortune to be raised in. Although most barrios are stricken with poverty, they do nonetheless contain the richness of the Mestizo culture. However, I am no stranger to poverty. My poverty was in Black and White, not Brown, but I am a stranger to the Mestizo culture and the people of that culture think me to be strange as to why I am foreign to them, a pocho (a Mexican descendent who doesn't know his culture or language).

I struggled to fit in a Black and White world: to my family who are half Black I was the White boy, but my influences were Black so I thought Black and sought to fit in where I could, and did everything to be accepted by everyone. Since my features were considered strange but likable, it wasn't hard to be accepted, but it was difficult to be honored, embraced and loved as one from a specific people.

As I grew older, I ventured out of my Black and White neighborhood and found the barrio. But by that time the barrio and its cholos were strange to me. I was too influenced by Black and White to want to embrace the barrio. I found that I wasn't alone, but in fact there are thousands of people like me, pochos – odd ones standing out in a Black and White world; strangers to the Brown, however being Brown ourselves.

The quest to understand my Chicano roots was actually an inevitable mission due to the natural tendency of an odd one not reflecting those around will sooner or later have an intellectual curiosity to discover the root origins of those having similar characteristic and physical features. However, in retrospect, although my quest was an innate curiosity, it was also correct to say that it was forced upon me – or shall I say, thrust upon me. Because being odd leads to odd behaviors that have consequences that led me to the confines of the penal system, and it was here that my quest took on emphasis and a new dimension.

RJ Castillo returns to the pages of *The Beat Without* in this piece of self-examination. Spurred by the reading of a book entitled "Brown," written by Richard Rodriguez, RJ takes us on his own journey of discovery about his cultural past. The journey touches on his personal estrangement from his own roots, as well as on larger questions of Chicanos in America today. His quest is detailed and ongoing, and we hope that it spurs many of you to embark upon similar journeys of self-definition. RJ writes us from Corcoran State Prison.

My Quest To Understand My Brown Roots Part 1

I am a Brown man by comparison to the typical Anglo-American of British ancestry. However, to many I may be considered stained by the Brown in a biological brew of European, Spanish and Aztec Indian; a matrimony decreed by the Spanish King Philip II on October 19th, 1514, which is also known as "the Laws of the Indies." On that date, my kind of Brown was legalized in efforts to bridge the gap between the conqueror and the conquered by producing a mestizo (mixed) race of people that would identify with both cultures of the Spanish and Aztec.

Some Latin American historians and sociologists call that mixing process "ladinoization:" the imperial Iberians' (Spaniard and Portuguese) attempt of a biological strategy of "miscegenation" (marriage of two different races of people) and "acculturation" (integrating the inferior culture into the dominant culture) to produce a race of mixed bloods that would become imperial loyalist, however, sympathetic to the peasantry of the indigenous Indian. These efforts, say the pundits, were to create a harmonious and stable society of cohabitation with these two peoples and their distinct cultures (source: "Latin American Radicalism:" edited by Irving L. Horowitz, Josue de Castro and John Gerassi).

However, some suggest that the Spanish acknowledged that the Indians were "human" because their culture was so elaborate, technical and advanced in civilization. Hence the Laws of the Indies gave moral freedom to the Spaniard to marry the Indian natives (source: "La Raza": by Stan Steiner).

I am inclined to believe that both hypotheses have a merging truth to them because the fact is that I am here today: a Brown mixed blood. I am a product of an unpure bloodline. I am a new breed that has evolved from two ancient civilizations from two separate continents.

I am horrified because of the origins and conditions by which my race of people evolved. I am confused to believe if it was either destiny or brutal calculation. I find it agreeable to suggest that it was a destiny of brutality to subject the loser of battle to the seed of the victor. Thus a combination of humility and savagery run through my veins.

What is even more perplexing to me is that I neither reflect in disposition or tradition my Spaniard or Indian heritage but instead reflect an English-American. I am confused as to why am I Anglicized, speaking and writing only in one language that is, in fact, foreign to my unpure bloodline. Isn't this the communication and taste of an English man? Therefore I conclude that I am a Brown man adrift and awry from my ancestral roots and Mestizo culture.

I realize my individual culture is one of freelance – I adapt and adopt any culture of significance and convenience. I am a time portal of ancient civilizations and modern manifestations, a product of a cycle of victors of war and dominance over the peasant. I am a paradox, a result of racism. I am a nomad wandering within the trends and traditions of the most modern and developed society in the world but caged for my rage of confusion.

**THE
BEAT
WITHIN**

Racial Segregation In Prison Part 3

The isolated world of incarcerational institutions has many social complexities. One in particular is racial segregation. The gravitation to people of similarity is not only natural, but it is an unwritten rule amongst inmates and a classificational necessity for the officials. Racism runs rampant in prisons because of the competition for privileges in a scarce and dense environment. An individual of a particular ethnicity is a representative of his or her ethnicity whether he or she chooses the job or not. Therefore, the individual is under tremendous social pressure to conform to the collective of his or her specific race. Any compromises of inclusion within a collective race for an individual of a different race comes with diplomacy between the collective fractions of races and expectance of the individual of difference to assimilate into the sought-after race. This doesn't come without stigmas, however affordance of protection from the collective is given.

I entered the prison system unaware of the racism and tried to maintain myself as a lone individual. This did not last as I progressed to tougher, battle-prone environments; the need of manpower for feuding groups became imperative for them to intensify their recruiting. I still tried to maintain my individuality as a loner but that was uprooted by the officials housing me within a location according to geographical classification, and I was thus identified as a sympathizer of a particular group because I programmed with them. I then became a target of insult and physical harm from the opposing group and subsequently felt I had no choice but to accept the welcoming invitation from the group of my vicinity. Hence I was introduced to my people of Brown through necessity, battle and infighting. It wasn't the best impression for introduction; nonetheless it was an impression I chose to accept and, eventually, represent.

The group I chose to represent was to me at that time idyllic to the image of a revolutionist, a militant revolutionist resisting enemies on all corners of the battlefield. We fought for inclusion within the daily activities of the prison and eradication of negative stereotypes produced by a powerful Brown group of Mexican nationalistic ideologies. Many of us believed we were Chicanos fighting against the expelling and abuse of non-Mexican descent razerers; that all Brown brothers of Latin heritage must be included in the safety net and guard of the collective. I thought I could be a part of a magnificent work of bringing dignity to my people of Brown ethnicity. I was mistaken! My fellow warriors proved deceptive, greedy, unable to lead, unwilling to compromise beneficially, abusive and victims of their own treachery. The power we sought to be free became the power that enslaved us to greed, and it is by this distortion that perverted our cause and subverted our original vision. My people of the group failed me and I failed them because I was powerless against the darkness of evil infiltrating the top echelon of leadership. They no longer function on solid principle and vision but are rather perpetuated on failed rhetoric, believable only by the naïve, lost, confused and power hungry – in other words, the victims of the prison system.

Yes, the prison system has a clever way of manipulating the sociology of prison and leaving an inmate with few

options to go on. But what is even more clever of the prison system is how they manipulate the machismo of the Brown man. I found out in my Brown discoveries that my people are very proud people; they have a strong spirit of machismo; they find dignity in outlasting hardships, and they are not quick to complain. Their intransigence is easy to manipulate because it is predictable. However, preservation of culture, tradition and heritage is worth the sacrifices and demean-ation of being subjects of manipulation. But I found out that the Brown gangs in prison, in fact, do not represent the original culture of La Raza; they are a misrepresentation of the totality of Brown razerers. These gangs are a culture, tradition and heritage of their own selves, that serve their own interest and agendas and not the interest and agenda of La Raza in general. Although they are an extension of the condition and prior movement activities of the barrio, nevertheless they have evolved outside of the scope of the original cultura of the barrio. However, they are still Brown and thus contain the natural disposition of the Brown man aforementioned. Hence they have been consistently manipulated, with the assistance of their machismo, to preserve the culture of their gangs. This has proven to be a self-destructive and self-defeating cycle that is causing the extinction of the Brown razerer on the general population – mainline – where more opportunities exist within an isolated society. Because of this, it will be inevitable that other minority groups will bathe in the abundance of resources left unused by the Brown man's validation of gang participation. But what is even worse is that these same Brown men will also find themselves disenfranchised once released from prison because of the recidivism of their behaviors.

I came to the conclusion that the Brown gangs have their own culture and not the true culture of La Raza, because many of us left the gangs still as ignorant about being a Chicano as when we first got involved. I learned the hard way what not to do to discover your roots. Gangs are not an easy pill you take and overnight you're indoctrinated as a bona fide razerer; you can not be baptized in the shedding of your own people's blood to authenticate your Brown skin. We can not think that sacrificing our own people in foolish gang fights is an offering to the gods of Aztlan to affirm we come from a line of Aztec warriors. This is foolish mythology!

The true creator allowed the conquest of the Spaniard over the Aztec to introduce a new kind of people, a people that have been progressing for four hundred years with many setbacks (granted), but also with acquisition of refined characteristics and strengths.

We can not afford to retrogress into the asylum of inaction or cause the system to justifiably silence many strong and intelligent Brown men and women by stuffing them into the tombs of indeterminate SHUs. Why have we abandoned our true culture for the gangster's culture and allowed our machismo to unnecessarily victimize us? I don't think gangsterism is what our Chicano predecessors of La Raza movement – Reies Tijerina, "Corky" Gonzalez, David Sanchez of the Brown Berets, etc. – had in mind for the future of our raza, because they were about progressing La Raza, not regressing us.

I entered the prison system unaware of the racism and tried to maintain myself as a lone individual. This did not last as I progressed to tougher, battle-prone environments...

Acculturation Part 4

I discovered that one aspect of the Chicano movement was resistance of acculturation into the Anglo culture. I understand that it may appear that the Brown gangs seem to be the only visible visage of that same resistance; and many may suggest that they are the only current line of defense against an Anglo dominated system to preserve the Chicano culture. Like I already explained, this is not true. The gang's teaching of the Chicano culture is subjective and is only used for identity purposes and not a cultivation of true cultural roots.

The original resistance to Anglo acculturation was in most part because the Anglo enforced acculturation as the only means for a Brown man to progress in the United States. This enforcement had connotations of colonial subjugation and oppression. The dignity of La Raza's culture was seriously compromised and treated by the Anglo as an inferior culture that had no place in the Anglo halls of academia. Thus those of brown skin were put through a humiliating process of de-education to uproot the culture and language of La Raza and supplant these with the Anglo culture and language. (My mom was a victim of this and thus the Anglo succeeded in wiping out the culture of La Raza in my immediate family; that's how I became a pocho.)

That was why Chicano resistance to acculturation was imperative and vital at that time. However, today, acculturation does not have the same associations as it did during the Anglo's blatant racism. Today acculturation is a skill that is used for purely social integrational purposes; it is a tool that helped the razero come out of poverty and position him or herself in the middle class power structure to pioneer the Brown people into a recognizable position of authority in this country. We as Mexican descendents are natives to the southwest of the United States. We are entitled to power in this country. The Anglo knows this and has become obliged to his own constitution. It would be idiotic to continue to resist to demand more power without earning it like the rest of the people in this country do. The same kind of resistance then would be counterproductive to the image and progression of La Raza today. We don't want to look like little illegitimate children who got their hands in the cookie jar and cry and pout for more cookies

when we haven't earned it – it is not the culture of La Raza to beg for handouts. However, the strength and unity of La Raza in resistance is done selectively when clear disenfranchisement is evident.

Many believe social acculturation is a sellout to La Raza; that it comes with the stigma and acknowledgement that La Raza are a conquered people and have no choice but to submit to the Anglo as inferior weaklings. Today, this is a flawed sentiment. Nevertheless it is true that La Raza is comprised of conquered people: our Indian ancestors were conquered by the Spaniard, and subsequently our Mestizo ancestors were conquered by the Anglo-Saxon. The difference in these two conquests is that the Indian (Aztec) was conquered biologically, culturally and agrarianly (land); whereas the Anglo only conquered the Mestizo agrarianly. The majority of the Mestizo bloodline and culture is intact, surviving the initial enforced acculturation. Although I can testify that that initial acculturation had drastic cultural consequence upon the Mestizo, including myself. But the fact remains that although I didn't grow up in the culture. The culture, however, is intact for me to learn it today – which I am doing – and my bloodline is still purely Mestizo. So the Anglo was unsuccessful in conquering La Raza culture and bloodline.

Today's acculturation is not forced upon us. It is a realization of being a part of the United States of America – the leading country of the world. And La Raza has contributed significantly to its power, status and wealth. We would be foolish not to socially integrate into the structures, self-inflicting sabotage to our own people. La Raza has been responsible in taking on the task of meeting the Anglo halfway, as a wider platform of trust and conciliation is being developed from both sides. There is still much more development to be made (no doubt), but a steady flow of progression is being made.

I learned in my discoveries that this is what a Chicano or Chicana is all about. The Chi Chi Meca (dog people) from which the word "Chicano" derived have come a long way from licking up the crumbs fallen off the table of the Anglo. We are gradually making way in becoming fully represented on that table; that was the vision of the Chicano movement my predecessors struggled hard for and much fruition has been achieved through these struggles.

Conclusion: Chicanos In America Part 6

Today, the strength of the union of the states is much more beneficial to all Americans. Chicanos don't need to be branded agitators when we have got our foot in the door and are firmly accepted and legitimized as a significant bloc of people.

The current strategy of the Chicano today is very intelligent and productive. Rather than engage in violent, separatist revolution, the Chicanos have embraced American democracy and capitalism and thus have established themselves as proprietors, entrepreneurs, professionals, experts, politicians, lobbyists and labor and trade unionists. Chicanos are on the way of acquiring inevitable representation upon the land of the ancestors, which will give them the opportunity to show the world their skills and abilities while at the same time implementing the visions our people held on to for the day they regained their dignity and prestige as a people, without having to offend others.

The destiny of La Raza in general (Chicanos and all Spanish

speaking descendents) is one of reintroduction of their culture into the American mainstream. We may have to save the Anglo from his own image as the world perceives him – as a destroyer, imperialist, enemy to cultures and civilizations and declarer of war upon our country, sending extremist terrorists onto our land. America is perceived as the "White devil" from many countries abroad, but in fact America in consummate is not White, however, contains a large fraction of Brown. It is the Brown people's duty to themselves and country to help reshape that awful image by rediscovering our roots, and although the Anglo was brutal to our people, offer the traits of our culture to make America a better leader of the world.

In conclusion I have discovered many things about my Brown roots that have given me a new appreciation for myself and my people. I realized being Chicano is not a quest, it is a lifestyle, it is a pride, it is a future from a hard past. It is an experience of emasculation, hardship, exploitation, manipulation, blood, sweat, poverty, durability, preservation and empowerment. My blood is rich!

Chicano Nationalism Part 5

The aspect of Chicano "nationalism" in the initial movement is also an archaic ideology for our times today. The nationalist doctrine held by some fractions of the Chicano movement consisted of resistance to the appellation "Hispanic" or "Latin American" to prevent from being associated or lumped together with other Spanish speaking ethnicities. The reasoning consisted of the fact that Mexican descent Chicanos are actually natives to northwest of America; that the southern states of the west - Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, Arizona, California - are in fact native lands to Mexico. And that other Spanish speaking ethnicities don't have the privilege of being natives of this land and thus the Chicano should be represented as a class of its own. This doctrine was also associated with the refusal to accept and acknowledge the Spaniard bloodline that connected other Spanish speaking ethnicities with each other. I have to admit that was hard-liner nationalism.

Those beliefs, although privy to the Chicano, are selfish to me. The exclusion of other Spanish descent Latinos is counterproductive in the development of a strong, solidified union of common affected people. Such a union has proven to be beneficial in creating a Latino power structure and electorate bloc that is currently affecting, beneficially for Latinos, the balance of democracy in America. As it currently stands, the census calculates that Latinos have grown to thirty-seven million in number - that includes Chicanos, etc. Latinos have replaced the African-American as the number one minority in this country and growing. This has worried the African-American but has given newfound prestige and importance to the Latinos' voice and concerns. Chicanos would not have achieved this feat currently acting as a class of minorities separate from other Spanish descent razeros. Therefore this aspect of Chicano nationalism has proven faulty.

Another aspect of Chicano nationalism that was held primarily by militant factions was the total separation of the Chicano's native lands from the union of the states of America, that violent revolution should be made to free Chicano ancestral land from Anglo domination and exploitation. I can not blame those honorary militant Chicanos' sentiments at that time. The Anglo was cruel to our people and psychologically manipulative. The tradition of La Raza is one that honors their obligation and word of agreement; this was the Indian way preserved by the Mestizo. The Anglo proved to be foreign to those honors and capricious to agreed upon treaties. For a half a century the Anglo honored the treaties made. However, after World War I and II, economic boom began, enriching the industrialized Americans. An international community was set up and America came out of the wars its leader. In result, a globalized consumer market needed to be supplied. The enthusiastic Anglo-American took on this task and thus enacted a total exploitation of all conquered land, mining, logging, drilling for the extraction of all natural resources. All treaties with natives were therefore void and their lands confiscated; imaginary boundaries implemented to cut off the natives' land. The Chicano who has been for centuries a self-sufficient people, living off his land, accustomed to the life of rural village, was then forced by agrarian take over to move to the Anglo's metropolis (big city) to find work to survive. Thus our people were pushed into urban living and poverty stricken barrios.

By the time of the '60s, many Chicanos rushed to volunteer for the Vietnam War in hopes that if seen as a patriot fighting for this country, more opportunities would be opened for them. Those Chicano men proved to be brave,

fighting most their battles on the frontlines against the Vietcong. But those that did return came back to the same conditions, even worse because the soldiers of that war were stigmatized as baby killers, drug addicts, diseased and lunatics. It was here where many of our militant leaders were born. The training of a soldier is to fight and eradicate hostile enemies to achieve objectives. There is no wonder where our militant leaders got their ideas from.

I believe if I lived in that era I would probably have been a strong sympathizer with the militants. But I am a pragmatist and I have to say that sentiment and advocacy is inappropriate for our time. The United States as a whole - Anglo, African-American, Asian, Hispanic, etc. - would not tolerate such action; America has become too powerful. Any separatists today would be branded terrorist guerrillas and easily stomped out with the fury of America's military might. Plus, you wouldn't find a solidarity commitment of a unanimous participation from all Chicanos. Such an operation would take a mass training of Chicanos in urban and commando warfare training. A massive clandestine infrastructure spanning across the country would have to be set up. Counterintelligence surveillance of the National Guard, FBI, CIA, NSA and all other domestic law enforcement would have to be made. Satellite topographical charts of all land of interest would have to be acquired to determine weak areas to defend. A small but powerful navy would have to be acquired to determine weak areas to defend. A small but powerful navy would have to be acquired to capture the Pacific water areas and gateways. And last, but not least, there would have to be much international support from powerful nations to finance and supply such efforts. This is just totally not feasible. As a matter of fact, this is just irrational thinking for today.



Today's Adults Failed Test

(Healing Must Start in The Heart)

During every episode of "South Park," the TV cartoon series based in the Colorado mountains, Kenny the weird kid in orange, is killed, and we just laugh and laugh and laugh. It doesn't seem funny anymore. Dear students of Columbine High School and elsewhere, we're so sorry, we failed you.

Adults are to be blamed. We could reach agreement with our mortal enemy to dismantle a sizable share of both nations' nuclear weapons, but we couldn't keep guns and pipe bombs out of the hands and hatred and horror out of the minds of two unstable men.

As a child, my step dad always told me to "leave it better than you found it." I don't think we are. We've sort of screwed up things. Now we'll have to fix them. What an inheritance.

As the young lady said, "we should be safe at school." You should be, but you're not. It's our fault, we caused the unhealthiness in society.

I am an agnostic - I don't know what or whom to believe in - but I have a theory that most of the problems in the world have been caused by (A) a breakdown in religion and (B) religion.

Wars are fought, and arguments are advanced because of religious beliefs and because there are no religious beliefs, sounds like a contradiction, but it's not. How can you solve a difference when one side has specific religious convictions and the other side has another set? For instance, one religion claims that if you sacrifice yourself for your religion (blowing up an airplane when you're on it) you will be rewarded. Another says that suicide is a mortal sin. Moslems disagree with Christians, Catholics disagree with Jews. Atheists disagree with every religion.

However, without religion, there are no moral guidelines. It was said, "Religion keeps the poor from killing the rich," which means to me that if you don't adhere to religious doctrines (such as the 10 Commandments), you will not get to heaven. But so many don't believe in a heaven or a hell, so they determine their own non-golden rules. It's acceptable to hate, hurt or murder.

Money and laws will not prevent the tragedy at Columbine High from being repeated. One sniper can stand on a tower at a university and randomly kill. The whole country can't be one gigantic metal detector.

Youth is resilient. In time you will recover, but you'll always remember. And you should. Your goal when you become adults (and this tragedy already has aged you) must be to bring back a sense of caring for your fellow men, women, teenagers and children. Treat them as you would have them treat you.

Every young person needs to get involved (and to be supported by parents and teachers) in sports, theater, band, choir, debate and other academic clubs, Eagle Scouts and members of 4-H are not troublemakers. In wholesome activities there is an automatic bonding with others, and there is discipline, and there is fun, and there is less idle time.

Our generation of athletes, actors, music stars and politicians don't want to be, and certainly aren't, role models, so it may be easier to idolize Hitler or any other fiend. You have to be role models to your children.

We put the burden on you, since we couldn't carry it. That's unfair, but true, we pass the torch because we got burned.

When I started high school barely 4 years ago, I attended El Dorado and Las Vegas High School in Nevada

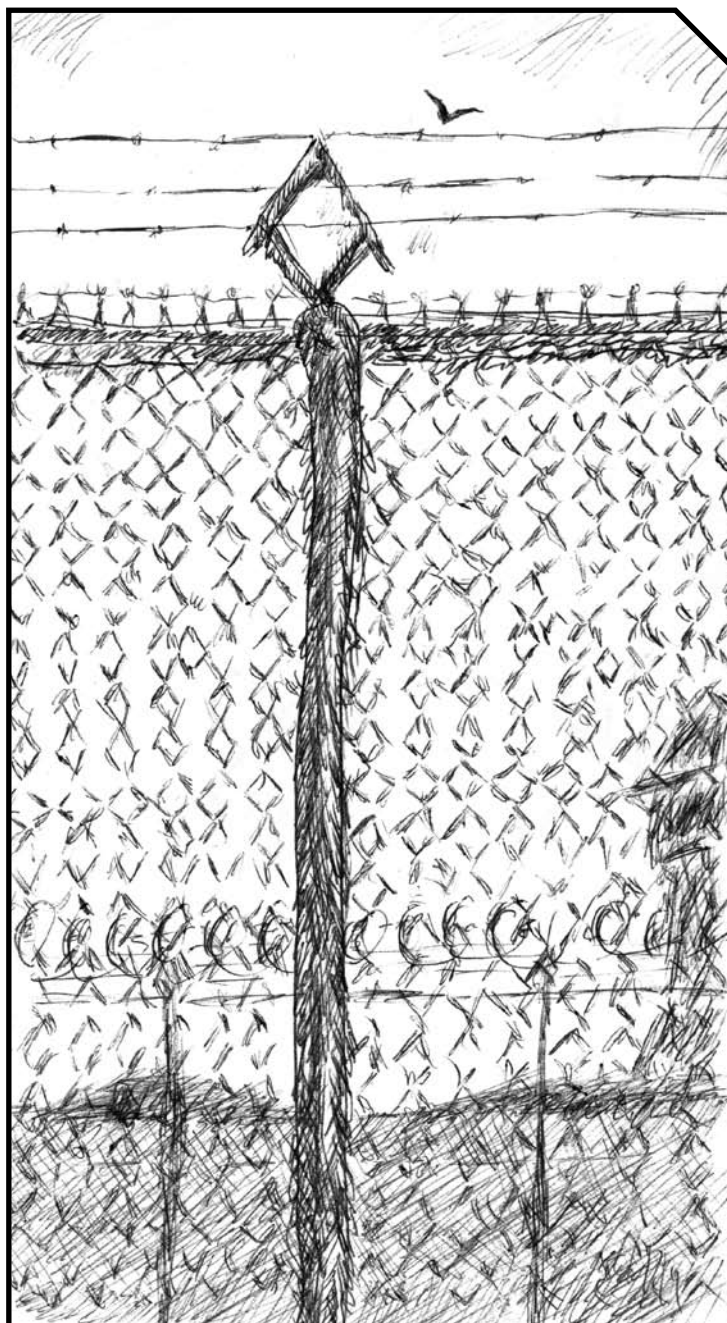
The following piece, written by Greg Johnson, is the last of two commentaries he submitted to The Beat which touched on the tragedy in Littleton Colorado. This piece is Greg's views on adults and their role in young people's lives. Greg is presently housed in the State of Colorado Department of Corrections.

until I transferred to Arvada High in Colorado before finally returning to Las Vegas High for my senior year. I had many friends who went to Columbine High - It could have been them. It's so close to home, people can't believe it.

The realization is reassuring that there is hope for the next millenium. Leave the world better than you found it. Your fellow students that died didn't get the chance to.

Children are the voice today -- Someone/everyone needs to listen. They are often the unforgotten ones. It's usually not realized until it's too late, ie: Columbine High School in suburban Denver Colorado.

I wish you luck, success and peace. Sincerely.
 Peace and respect



Hopefully, one day we will live in a society where everyone has access to high-quality health care, regardless of income level or citizenship status, both inside and outside prison walls. Health care should be right, not a privilege, for all of us.

read the rest of Jennifer Clarke's BWO piece on page 51

